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**POWER AND POLITENESS: A STUDY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN  
PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS**

by  
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**A dissertation submitted to  
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## **Power and Politeness: A Study of Social Interaction in Philippine Higher Education Classrooms**

### **Abstract**

Drawing upon naturalistic contextualized data, this study aims to expand current understanding of power and politeness in three higher education classrooms in the Philippines. It is particularly concerned to explore the usefulness of a politeness theory in describing the linguistic strategies that professors and students use when performing potentially face threatening acts. On the basis of data consisting of observation notes and audio recording, it is argued that (1) the difference in power between professors and students influences their choice of linguistic strategies. Professors used bald on-record language to ask lesson-related questions but oriented towards positive politeness rather than negative politeness when performing potentially face-threatening acts; students invoked negative politeness markers such as formal address forms, deference and hedging; (2) Pedagogical goals, lesson content, interactional context, and the presence and/or number of over hearers also exert pressure on the linguistic realisation of politeness. (3) The authoritative and discursive power of the professor over the students appears to be relatively fixed and unchallenged. But as the current investigation finds, there is another dimension to the professor-student relationship outside of the four walls of the classroom, where students, through one-to-one consultations, on-line discussions and journaling are afforded a less exposed, less face-threatening space.

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**1.1 Introduction**

It is believed that the quality of the relationship between teachers and students contributes to a comfortable classroom atmosphere, which is an important aspect of learning (Nguyen 2007). Therefore, professors<sup>1</sup> are expected to simultaneously work towards the pedagogical goals of the class and attend to relational goals as well. But as Nguyen argues (ibid, p.285), this creates a paradox: to achieve the instructional goals, the teacher is often required to perform face-threatening acts such as correcting students' mistakes or giving negative feedback; these acts, however, can result in loss of face and a negative classroom environment. In such an atmosphere, the professor might need to put the pedagogical task on hold in order to restore face and preserve harmony. As Kingwell (1993, p.401) asserts,

communication (...) is not simply phrasing interests and arguments or the maximally efficient transfer of information; it is also about not hurting other people's feelings, not having mine hurt, not saying all we could say, oiling the wheels of mundane social interaction, and strengthening the ties that bind us together.

An important component in the 'lubrication of social wheels' is politeness, which can be viewed as an individual's verbal or non-verbal way of showing concern for other people's feeling, being respectful and avoiding saying or doing anything that may be

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<sup>1</sup> Academics who teach in tertiary level education

considered offensive by the other person one is talking to. It also refers to positive concern and non-imposing behaviour towards others (Holmes 1995, pp.4-5).

## **1.2 Linguistic Politeness and Power**

The school is a 'universe of language' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1994, p.19) and language is at the 'centre of what happens in the classroom.' (Manke 1997, xvi). In this study, language is being privileged as the focal point of investigation to gain understanding of how professors and students 'do' power and politeness in the classroom.

Intuitively, most people can infer the type of relationship the professor is invoking when she asks "do you understand" versus "is it understood." There is a huge difference between a swift, matter-of-fact delivery of "assignments must be handed in by Monday" versus a long winded "it's just one three-page ok, NOT a ten-page essay which I would like you to do over the weekend ok while I labour marking your test papers. I will let you off early, in fact, half an hour early to give you time to work on your writing so that there will be no excuse not to hand in your essay on Monday ok?"

In the current study, we will have a close look at data similar to the above to explore how three Filipino professors use linguistic politeness to accomplish the competing demands of transacting the business of teaching and attending to the relational needs of the students. An efficient and systematic transfer and acquisition of knowledge requires clear and unambiguous speech; yet, polite language tends to make



expressions vague and obscure especially when avoiding saying something that could bruise egos and hurt feelings.

### **1.3 Aims**

The aim of this study is to draw upon naturally occurring data from three higher education classrooms in the Philippines to expand current understanding on how the difference in power between professors and students influence their use of linguistic politeness. It seeks to explore other factors that affect their choice of politeness strategies. Using a context-sensitive approach, this research also hopes to describe how professors and students use language to construct social relations. Lastly, the very sociolinguistic theory used in the study data will be assessed in terms of its usefulness in explaining the intricacies of social interaction in the classroom.

#### **1.3.1 *Why power and politeness***

Politeness is central to effective human relations (Kallia 2004, p.145) as it ‘oils the works,’ ‘softens the blow,’ makes giving bad news more palatable, makes easier the asking of favours (Henry 1993, p.56), and serves as a ‘diplomatic protocol’ to neutralize aggression (Brown and Levinson 1987, p.1).

Power is an important dimension of politeness. In the classroom, the teacher is traditionally seen to hold the seat of power because of status, age, specialist knowledge and the ability to assign grades. As our data will illustrate, the power

differential between teachers and students, in addition to other factors, does exert pressure on language and the use of linguistic markers of politeness.

I would argue that the findings of this research can add to our understanding of how social relationships are established, maintained and shaped through talk. Given the importance that language plays in teaching and learning, significant insights can be gained from an awareness of how specific linguistic devices can be used strategically to create distance and closeness, formality and friendliness. Furthermore, a study of politeness can tell us more about “what contributes to the success or failure of our everyday interactions and what it is that strains and breaks or creates and improves social relationships” (Sifianou 1992, p.209).

### **1.3.2 *Why the Philippines***

In spite of a healthy research tradition on linguistic politeness in the last two decades, there does not seem to be any studies of similar nature using a Philippine context, particularly one that uses spoken classroom discourse as data. It is hoped that the results of this investigation will shed some light on how the politeness model used here, claimed to be universally valid, can account for social interaction in Philippine classrooms. Furthermore, the country holds personal interest to me because I was born and educated there. I do think that my sociocultural background and insider knowledge can add another dimension to the investigation.

## **1.4 Organisation of the Study**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In Chapter 1 above I presented the main aims of the study and rationale for them. Chapter 2 surveys relevant literature including theoretical background, definition of terms and related empirical studies. The research questions are outlined in this chapter. Chapter 3 clarifies important theoretical and methodological considerations and describes different methods of data collection. Rationale for choosing the particular method used is explained in this chapter, as well as concerns of ethical nature. Chapter 4 covers the data collection process including discussions on gaining entry, and a brief background about the Philippines. In the second half of this chapter, I explain what will be considered as ‘data’ and highlight the importance of context in analysis. After a description of the analytical framework, I give an overview of the three higher education classrooms observed, followed by a fine-grained analysis of selected examples. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings in light of the research questions, the theory used and related empirical studies. Lastly, I summarise the main findings in Chapter 6, address the limitations of the study and outline areas for further research.

## CHAPTER 2      LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness as an area of research has grown exponentially in the last three decades. It generated an explosion of scholarly activity following the publication of Brown and Levinson's politeness model in 1978, which was later re-published in 1987. There have been other well-known approaches to politeness (see Leech 1983, Lakoff 1973) but the Brown and Levinson model remains the most influential, the most comprehensive and considered the most operationalizable.

In this chapter, I discuss Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness and clarify related terminology that will be deployed throughout this paper. Then, I examine criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theory, describe the position I take in applying their model, and then outline relevant empirical research on power and politeness. The research questions are presented in the last section of this chapter.

### 2.1      Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is a universally occurring phenomenon used by all competent adult members in social interaction. It refers to redressive linguistic devices that speakers use to counter-balance potentially face threatening activities. It is argued that everybody has 'face,' a concept borrowed from Goffman (1967) which is similar to self esteem and is defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson p.61). Face can be positive or negative. A *positive face want* is a person's desire to be well thought of,

liked and admired by others, while a *negative face want* refers to a person's wish to act freely, unimpeded and not to be imposed upon by others. Face is always at risk of being lost or threatened so, it is considered in everyone's interest to maintain each other's face. This can be done by avoiding offensive or insulting acts that might be considered face threatening. Face threatening acts (FTA hereafter) are those acts that run contrary to the needs of the addressee to be liked (e.g. disapproval, disagreement and criticism) and to be unimpeded (e.g. commands, requests and suggestions).

### **2.1.1 Face Threatening Acts: Strategies for Speakers**

There are times when the need to perform an FTA outweighs the need to save face. Brown and Levinson (p.60) outline four superstrategies, ordered according to the seriousness of the FTA, that speakers can deploy when they have the occasion to perform an act contrary to the positive and negative face needs of the hearer.

- [1] **Do the FTA on-record, baldly without redress**, which means being direct and unambiguous such as professor saying to a student, "This kind of academic writing is not acceptable."
- [2] **Do the FTA with positive politeness (PP hereafter)** which can be achieved by saying something like "You have some really good points here but we should discuss how we can improve this essay."
- [3] **Do the FTA with negative politeness (NP hereafter)**, which is defined by a redressive action addressed to the hearer's negative face. A professor might

tell a student, “I know you’re really busy and have several articles to work on, but the office requires a re-submission by next Friday.”

- [4] **Do the FTA off-record** or indirectly criticising the student’s work without committing one’s self to the act of criticising. The professor might say “I imagine you’ve been really busy with your part-time job.”

It should be pointed out that there is a fifth strategy which is “Do not do the FTA.” However, because of the difficulty in knowing when speakers refrain from performing an FTA (without having to interview them) it will not be the concern of this study.

### **2.1.2 Criticisms of Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory**

Brown and Levinson’s concept of politeness has been the subject of constant and close scrutiny (see Driscoll 2007, Lakoff and Ide 2005, Watts 2003, Spencer-Oatey 2000, Eelen 2001, Meier 1995). Critics question its ‘universal’ application and cross cultural applicability as well as its notion of face and face threatening acts (see Felix-Brasdefer 2006, Nwoye 1992, Gu 1990, Matsumoto 1988). The approach has also been accused of being overly ‘paranoid’ (Kasper 1990, p.197) due to its emphasis on conflict avoidance as the main motivation for polite behaviour. Fukushima (2004, p.368) argues that Brown and Levinson rely too much on sentence-level politeness; however, this claim is only partially correct. On close inspection, Brown and Levinson (p. 232) do recognise that FTAs can be contained in a series of utterances and exchanges.

Criticisms of the theory point out that its face-saving view of politeness is severely limiting and fails to account for the intricacies of social interaction. For one, politeness can do the opposite of face protection; it can be ill-intentioned (see Ermida 2006) and be used manipulatively to make an individual's exercise of power more acceptable (Bradac & Ng, 1993). Secondly, as the data in Chapter 4 suggest, politeness strategies are deployed not just to prevent hurt feelings and avoid conflict but also to create a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning.

The usefulness of Brown and Levinson's approach in conducting empirical studies has often been questioned (see Meier, 1995). I would argue, however, that Brown and Levinson's model can be valuable for two reasons: firstly, its core concepts are considered operationally valid (Ermida 2006, p.814) providing a framework for describing different aspects of social interaction; secondly, it provides an extensive list of linguistic output strategies for empirical research. It is the only one to date that provides enough details for micro-analysis and at the same time accounts for local discourse context (Stubbe et al. 2003, p.364).

The approach taken in this investigation is to use Brown and Levinson's model as a preliminary descriptive framework within which or in contrast to which, Philippine higher education discourse can be understood. It is being employed as a tool to sharpen the focus of the analytic eye and does not preclude other paradigms that can better explain the phenomena under study. This paper takes the position that there is not one single theory that can satisfactorily account for the minute details of social

interaction. Given the space and time limitation of this research, the application of one model is defensible.

### ***2.1.3 Cross Cultural Applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory***

Although each culture<sup>2</sup> will inevitably differ in what it considers as FTAs and how they are redressed, it is important not to exaggerate differences. As Sifianou (1992, p.43) rightly points out, universal principles of communication must exist; otherwise it would be impossible to have meaningful contact between people from different ethno-cultural back grounds. Ji (2000, p.1061) adds that although Brown and Levinson's concept of positive and negative face "may play an unbalanced role in a particular culture, there has been no evidence that they cannot be identified in that culture."

### ***2.1.4 Power in Brown and Levinson's Model***

In Brown and Levinson's (p.77) conception, power is defined as "the degree to which individuals can impose their plans and self-evaluation at the expense of other people's plans and self-evaluation." It is suggested that the difference in power between speaker and hearer will influence their discursive practices. For example, those in relatively more powerful positions may have less need for softening their language when talking to someone with less power. And since NP is deemed more

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<sup>2</sup> I follow Spencer-Oatey's (2008,p.4) definition of culture as a "fuzzy set of beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and each other's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour."



polite than PP, less powerful speakers will orient themselves to NP or off-record strategy.

Power is a highly contested area. Current literature associates the term with dominance, authority, status, distance, control and rank. In this study, I am looking at power on two levels. The first level is the 'given' which refers to the asymmetry resulting from the institutional nature of the professor-student relationship where professor determines the topics for discussion, distributes speaking rights, and regulates the amount of speaking time (Swann 2000, p.205). The second level pertains to the discursively 'constructed' and 'negotiable' nature of power. It can be argued that while professors appear to have more power than their students by virtue of their status, age, skill and authority to assign grades (Rees-Miller 1999, p.1095), students also have the power to negotiate classroom interaction (see Manke 1997) even when institutional rank makes this negotiation unequal (Johnstone 2002, p.113).

## **2.2 Empirical Research on Power and Politeness**

The relationship between power and politeness has only fairly recently been studied (Harris 2003, p.48). Research from workplace settings suggests that the two variables are inextricably linked. Takano (2004), from her study of nine employment settings in Japan, reported that Japanese women in positions of power deploy a mixture of powerful and less powerful speech when interacting with subordinates. Taking a speech act approach with a focus on directives, requests and advice, Vine (2004) investigated how female managers and employees from different organisational levels in a New Zealand workplace emphasise or minimise power differences. Her

findings indicate that social distance and power are not static entities but are constantly negotiated. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Holmes, Stubbe and Vine (1999) drew from a corpus of varied workplace encounters to describe how polite language is used to mitigate power in the workplace. In Switzerland, Diamond (1996) collected data from a psychotherapy training organisation consisting principally of American and Swiss-German speakers. Her research highlights the consensual nature of power as manifested in discourse strategies.

Locating her study in British courtrooms and police stations, Harris (2003) claims that contrary to Brown and Levinson's model, people with relatively powerful positions use heavily mitigated language when addressing less powerful hearers. Using a literary piece for her analysis, Ermida (2006, p.856) reports similar findings. As she puts it, "the linguistic behaviour of O'Brien-the-ally is rather laden with politeness tactics, even though he is by far the most powerful member of the discursive exchanges." This is a departure from Morand's (1996, 2000) results suggesting the opposite. In a laboratory based research, Morand found that those in higher positions used less linguistic politeness than those in lower positions. His data were collected from 84 American university students who engaged in four role plays and performed FTAs while interacting with a hypothetical other. In explaining his findings, Morand (1996, p.552) admits that "in real life, performing an FTA toward a potentially reactive face may cause speakers to express more politeness than they did toward the imagined face in the experiment."

Locher (2004) analysed the interplay between power and politeness in disagreements as played out in three different contexts: a family setting, a business meeting among

colleagues at a research facility, and public discourse excerpts from the 2000 US Election. She illustrates how politeness is deployed to mitigate conflict. She argues,

since the exercise of power can jeopardize the social equilibrium between interactants (in symmetrical as well as asymmetrical relationships), it is often softened by a display of consideration for the addressee ( *ibid*, p.4).

While there seems to be a wealth of power and politeness studies in the workplace and other professional institutions, there is a conspicuous lack of research activity focusing on higher education discourse. At the time of this writing, there is none involving Philippine contexts to my knowledge.

In Japan, Cook (2006) analysed audio- and video-recorded data from academic consultation sessions by three male professors and their undergraduate students in two Tokyo universities. She looked at the use of the Japanese honorific and non-honorific form and found that the use of the polite form is not pre-determined by institutional authority; but rather by the moment-by-moment interactional achievement by both parties. She claims that it cannot be assumed that, in all contexts, lower-status speakers will always show politeness to addressees of higher social status (*ibid*, p.286). Cook's study informs the current one in terms of the analytic process when scrutinizing power. While institutional authority is fixed, power as a discursive and interactional process is subject to negotiation.

Thonus (1999) examined 16 academic writing tutorials at Indiana University to determine factors that influence tutor dominance. Framing writing tutorials as

institutional discourse where the tutor is considered to have higher status than the tutee, she used suggestions (frequency and whether unmitigated or mitigated) as the unit of analysis. She posits that dominance is dictated by the institutional context and not by tutor attributes like language proficiency or gender.

Rees- Miller (1995) investigated linguistic markers that are used to soften and strengthen disagreements in an American university. She found that contrary to Brown and Levinson 's model, 'high power' professors used linguistic markers of politeness more frequently than 'low power' students. Students disagreed with less redress and professors disagreed with greater redress. Rees-Miller's study raises the issue of what can be considered face-threatening. While in some cultures, disagreement with the teacher can be highly face-threatening, she suggests that it can be face-enhancing for those who want to instil critical thinking amongst their students.

Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) examined linguistic devices that soften disagreements in asymmetric discourse when interlocutor corrects the mistake of an addressee of unequal status. Their study is different from Cook, Thonus and Rees-Miller in that they did not use naturally occurring data. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli gathered data from 80 native speakers of Turkish through questionnaires (more about this in the next chapter). The authors report that 'hypothetical' professors used direct language without feeling the need for redressive action but were equally concerned with building rapport and solidarity. Students softened corrections and disagreements with higher power addressees by using questions instead of statements. It is worth pointing out that in the workplace studies

mentioned above, the one study (Morand 1996) that seems to fully validate Brown and Levinson's prediction of the effect of power on discourse is the only one that did not use naturalistic data. It can be argued that the difference in findings can be attributed to what people think they should say versus what they actually say in contextualised, real-life situations. This does not necessarily imply that naturalistic discourse is superior to elicited data.

To sum up, the studies reviewed show that power and politeness are inevitably connected. While power seems to be institutionally pre-determined, it can be emphasised or downplayed depending on the goals of the interaction. The strategic use of linguistic markers of politeness gives power its fluid nature negotiating the pragmatic spaces between symmetry and asymmetry.

### **2.3 Politeness and the Filipino Culture**

It is generally accepted that the notion of politeness and polite behaviour vary across cultures. I would argue that there are also gaps in our knowledge of particular cultures. The Philippines is of particular interest as an under-studied research area where politeness patterns may differ from those in 'western' Anglophone context.

Filipinos have a saying: *Hindi baleng huwag mo akong mahalin, huwag mo lang akong hiyain*, which translates into 'It does not matter if you don't love me, just don't shame me.' (Yengoyan and Makil 2004). Filipinos are claimed to place a high value on the protection and preservation of the public face. Hence using a politeness

theory that has face-saving as its core seems to be the appropriate tool in the investigation of the country's cultural ethos.

It is of pragmatic interest to study language in a culture where indirect communication tends to be favoured. As Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000, p. 56) suggest, Filipinos tend to have an indirect style of communication which is often mistaken for dishonesty, social ingratiation and hypocrisy by people from other cultures. It can therefore be argued that in these days of globalization where communication across cultures could easily lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, there is value in shedding some light on how the principles of social interaction in this particular culture are embodied in language.

## **2.4 Research Questions**

This paper hopes to expand current knowledge of intercultural communication and attempts to fill a neglected aspect of research in Philippine linguistics and pragmatics. In the absence of previous related studies in the country, I will adopt an exploratory approach. Imposing limitations at this stage (MRes/pilot) might unnecessarily inhibit data collection and analysis. The following research questions will be explored:

1. What type of linguistic politeness strategies do Filipino professors use with students when performing face threatening acts?
2. What type of linguistic politeness strategies do Filipino students use when performing face threatening acts with professors/ with other students?

3. How do Filipino professors and students use linguistic politeness to construct relations?
4. What other factors (such as pedagogical aims, interactional goals, situation-specific context and so on) influence the choice of politeness markers?

The general hypothesis being tested in this study is that the power differential (perhaps in addition to other factors) between professors and students will exert pressure on their use of linguistic politeness. Professors will have less need for mitigation while students will use more polite language.

## **CHAPTER 3            METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

It is argued that the reliability of any empirical research depends more on the method of data collection than on the methods of analysis used (Lin 2005, p.75). In this section, I tease out relevant theoretical and methodological issues and will proceed in this order: first, I briefly discuss the quantitative-qualitative paradigm and then outline some pertinent data collection methods. Then, I explore the role of the researcher and address issues of objectivity and validity. Lastly, since the research involves human participants, I address concerns of ethical nature.

### **3.1    The Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigm**

Qualitative research is often associated with description, meanings and understanding; the quantitative method, with statistics, number and measurements (Berg 2004). In sociolinguistics, qualitative approaches are concerned with the “close examination of specific instances of speaker’s language use” while quantitative research “tends to look for general patterns in the distribution of linguistic features across different groups of speakers or different contexts” (Swann *et al.* 2004, p.252). Although the two approaches have conventionally been seen as dichotomous, researchers can and have used them in combination. In analyzing specific occurrences of language use in a community, for example, a researcher may look to the general distribution of linguistic features in that community for explanation (ibid.).



Indeed, as Hammersley (1992, p.172) maintains, it is possible to adopt a particular position on one issue and take up another on others depending on the goals and circumstances of the study. For example, if greater precision is the prime consideration, then breadth of description might take second priority; and vice versa (ibid). Given the nature of my data and the motivation for this study which is an in depth account of Philippine classroom interaction, I have elected to use the qualitative paradigm. An informal quantification of linguistic strategies used by research participants was done in order to supplement the qualitative description.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

In the field of linguistic pragmatics and in politeness research in particular, data are collected mainly through observation and elicitation or a combination of both (Lin 2006). Observation methods typically entail field work, field notes, and audio/video-recording of the naturally occurring interaction. Elicitation techniques can include the use of questionnaires called Discourse Completion Task (DCT), open-ended role plays and elicited conversation (see Spencer-Oatey 2008, Lin 2006, Beebe and Cummings 1996).

A DCT usually contains a contextualised description of several hypothetical speech situations followed by an incomplete dialogue. Participants fill in missing parts of the dialogue. DCTs can be easily administered enabling the researcher to reach a large number of participants quickly. However, as Mills (2003, p.44) claims, “when answering questionnaires, informants tend to provide stereotypical beliefs and language rather than the language that they actually use.” More importantly, DCTs

cannot capture the psychosocial quality of face to face communication (Beebe and Cummings 1996, p.77). They do not bring out the emotional depth and the unfolding dynamics of negotiation and sequential moves or turns, which is the heart of real interaction (Lin 2006, p.78).

The elicited conversation and role play methods are both staged for the purpose of collecting data. In elicited conversations, participants assume assigned discourse roles and talk about a particular topic determined by the researcher. In the role play method, participants take on different social roles and simulate specific communicative encounters (Spencer Oatey 2008, Lin 2006). As with DCT, elicited conversations and role plays enable the researcher to control variables such as gender, ethnicity, education, and so on. These methods allow for hypothesis testing and the creation of situations that would optimally draw out the focal object of inquiry (Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu 2007). For example, if the focus of the study is on professor-student disagreements, this can easily be built into the design of the DCT, the elicited conversations and the role plays.

I do not see any objections to using any of the elicitation techniques above but I am more interested in naturally occurring data. Observing participants in their naturalistic setting with real-world context and going about their normal activity (activity which would have taken place without the presence of the researcher) holds more analytic fascination to me. It can also be argued that the act of being polite is a socially-motivated behaviour in the “dual sense of being socially constituted and of feeding back into the process of structuring social interaction” (Kallia 2004, p.145).

There are several inherent challenges in using observation as a data collection method. For one, there are no guarantees that the phenomenon under study will take place within the time frame of the data collection. For example, if I wanted to focus on apologising in classrooms, it might take extensive field visits before I am able to collect sufficient data. Other difficulties are to do with gaining access, building rapport with informants and participants, getting permission and consent, and dealing with issues of ethical nature. Additionally, the very presence of an observer may influence the behaviour of the observed, which brings ‘naturally occurring’ data into question.

### **3.3 The Role of the Researcher in Observation Method**

To collect my data, I used the non-participant observer method. I took field notes, made audio recording of the classes and had informal chats with teachers and some students. Since I was the ‘instrument’ through which data are collected (and later on analysed), reflexivity and biography are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed.

Prior to data collection in the Philippines, I was confident that having grown up and having experience of higher education there should enable me to easily collect and examine my data. Moreover, since I had left the country more than 20 years ago, I thought it would be easy to maintain analytic distance. However, it took a lot of conscious effort to separate my pre-conceived notions from what I was observing. On, the other hand, I do believe that my insider status and my cultural membership allowed me to see things that might otherwise go unnoticed. Indeed, Emerson (1983,

p.184) states, fieldwork is a “deeply personal as well as a scientific project,” where the subjective and emotional experiences are bound up with the interpretative process.

### **3.4 Accounting for Objectivity and Validity**

It has been argued that researchers cannot help but bring their own biographies and subjectivities to their field of inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), thus making a value-free interpretation impossible (Eisner 1993). So, instead of denying that my subjectivity can contaminate the data, my approach is to lay it out in the open and make it part of the analytic process.

Katz (1983, p.145) claims that qualitative researchers can and do empower readers to become subsequent testers. For instance, readers, based on their past experience of being a student or a teacher, can form their opinions regarding the findings of this study. Furthermore, the audio-recording is a permanent record of what I had heard during the observation (and transcription) and may be available for public inspection.

### **3.5 Ethics**

Approval was gained from the ‘Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee’ (HPMEC) before data collection. I was required to submit three documents: a detailed application form, a copy of the research information sheet (Appendix 1); and a copy of the consent form (Appendix 2). Participants were assured of anonymity

and confidentiality. As a gesture of gratitude for taking part in the study, participants will be offered a workshop based on the data at a later date.

After field work, I consulted the OU Ethics Committee because I had some ethical concerns regarding 'written' consent. The participants from one of the three classes only gave me their verbal consent, without signing the consent form. The professor said that their (hers and the students') 'word' should be good enough and that it was culturally inappropriate to be too 'formal' when giving permission. I was advised by the OU Head of the Ethics Committee that it was acceptable to take individuals' consent in whatever form is culturally appropriate; however audio recording might be considered where written consent is not culturally appropriate.

In this chapter, I describe my data collection approach and procedures. I also provide information about the Philippines. Then I discuss the importance of context in analysis. I also provide a rationale for not using a discourse analytic approach which is commonly identified with ‘power.’ After explaining my analytical framework, I give an overview of the three classrooms observed. I analyse selected examples in this order: first I scrutinise the linguistic strategies that professors use to ‘do’ power and politeness; second, I analyse the linguistic devices deployed by students. A short summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

#### **4.1 Data Collection**

In collecting my data, I borrowed concepts closely associated with ethnography such as field work, observation, naturalistic data, reflexivity and reactivity. My interest in the interconnectedness of language and meaning in action, culture and context hints of interactional sociolinguistics. The analysis in the second half of this section is informed by pragmatics and discourse analysis. Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, the framework being used here, was drawn from research traditions in social anthropology, conversational discourse analysis, syntax and linguistic pragmatics (Gumperz in Brown and Levinson, foreword, p.xiii). I contend that there is merit in adopting an eclectic approach in order to closely examine the multi-faceted nature of power and politeness.

#### **4.1.1 *The Philippines and its culture***

It has been claimed that politeness is interrelated with language and social reality (Lin 2005); hence, basic cultural norms for polite behaviour should be taken into consideration in the analysis (Pan 2008). It seems then, not only appropriate but necessary to provide relevant socio-cultural background about the Philippines.

The Philippines is a multicultural and multilingual South East Asian archipelago with more than 100 distinct languages (Mcfarland, 2004). English and Pilipino (also known as Tagalog) are the two official languages. English is the principal language of school instruction and also performs the role of integrating ethno-linguistically diverse communities with each other and to the rest of the world (Bernardo, 2004). Indeed, I myself have to use English with other Filipinos whose linguistic background is not Tagalog, which is my mother tongue.

Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000, p.56) maintain that Filipinos have a deep regard for values such as respect for authority and concern for others. They are said to be group-oriented rather than individualistic, and consider harmony to be a greater value than truth (Mercado 1994, p.95). Classroom culture tends to be highly teacher-centred, authoritarian and where students depend on the teachers for answers (Licuanan 1994). This is echoed by Tiongson (1994, p.197) who states that teachers are considered the ‘supreme authority’ whose words are accepted by the students as the ‘gospel truth.’

I do recognise the problem with making generalised statements about a culture. However, I am simply trying to lay a contextual framework that might be of relevance in building an interpretative base. It seems important to me to be aware of the perspectives of cultural members (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, Mercado, Licuanan and Tiongson) of the data collection site.

#### **4.1.2 *Gaining Access***

Gaining access to research sites in Manila was done mainly by email. Through the school's websites, I found the contact details of potential informants to whom I sent information about my research (Appendix 3). For schools outside the city, negotiating entry was done through an intermediary who personally negotiated with gatekeepers on my behalf. The difference in methods of getting research permission probably reflects the rural vs. urban cultural differences. Access was negotiated with four schools (two universities and two colleges) although the current study will focus on only two.

#### **4.1.3 *Procedure***

##### **4.1.3.1 *Piloting the Recording Devices***

Prior to data collection, I did a trial of my recording devices which included two digital recorders (*Olympus* is the brand name), a lap top and audio player software (*Express Scribe*) onto which I had to upload the data. To conduct the pilot, I had to



simulate a classroom setting so I invited other postgraduate students to a work-in-progress seminar. I arranged the seating in the traditional classroom style where the teacher's desk is in front of the room and student chairs in rows. I put one digital recorder at the front of the room and one at the back. I listened to the recording immediately after the seminar and found the quality to be very good. I uploaded the data onto the audio player software, listened to the recording again and was satisfied with the results. I erased the data afterwards.

#### **4.1.3.2 Quantity of Data Collected**

The data being analysed in this study are part of a larger corpus involving 25 hours of classroom observation collected between May 4 and May 23, 2008 from four higher education institutions in the Philippines, three of which are located in Manila and one in a semi-rural setting. Although I realised from the outset that I might not be able to use all data within the MRes time frame, I wanted to collect enough data to gain as comprehensive a view of the classroom situation in the Philippines as reasonable. I also wanted to have a sizeable corpus which can be useful to refine research questions and determine boundaries for a three-year PhD programme. With hindsight, I now realize that collecting more data than I needed made it more difficult to select an appropriate sample of data for analysis. It took a lot of time to listen repeatedly to the recordings and to re-read my notes.

#### **4.1.3.3 Selection of Transcripts for Analysis**

Of the 25 hours corpus, 12 hours of recording were taken from graduate (MA level) classes involving three different teachers in the Education department. The MA classes were all done “presentation style” where groups of students gave a talk on an assigned topic while the lecturers performed regulative and facilitative functions. I decided not to include the data from the MA classes in this investigation for pragmatic reasons. Due to the presentation format of the classes, there were a lot of multi-party speech overlaps which made it very difficult to transcribe the recording. It took me nine hours to make a rough transcription of one hour of data. Furthermore, it would take an enormous amount of time and patience to transcribe about four hours of the MA data due to background noise. As it was summer time in the Philippines, the windows were open letting sounds from the outside contaminate the recording environment.

Of the 13 hours of undergraduate class observation, I managed to collect only seven hours of recorded data. The remaining six hours were field notes only because the teachers requested me not to make an audio recording for fear of making the students unnecessarily uncomfortable. I did not record ‘silence’ when students were doing a writing activity or solving mathematical equations. I did not include the Mathematics classes in the current study for analysis because I found that the data did not contain sufficient instances of the kind of interaction requiring the use of politeness markers. This is probably due to the nature of the subject matter where there is a specific right

and wrong answer. Furthermore, there was a lot of ‘silence’ in the Mathematics classes when students were solving their arithmetic problems.

In this paper, I focus on three classes: Literature, Academic Writing and Foundation of Nursing. I chose the Literature and Academic writing classes (from the same urban university) for two reasons: the audio recording from both classes was of relatively better quality compared to the rest of the data; they were similar in format (lecture/discussion) which produced more interaction between professors and students. I included the nursing class in the analysis because I was interested in exploring data from an institution located in a semi-rural setting. Since one of the research questions was to explore factors, in addition to power, that may affect the choice of linguistic politeness, I thought it would make for richer analysis to include a class from a potentially different regional culture. I realized after the analysis that the data base was too small to make claims regarding regional culture as a factor in the choice of linguistic devices. Although the data seem to suggest that students in the semi-rural school attend to a more ‘kinship-based’ type of politeness, further research is necessary to verify this observation.

#### **4.1.3.4 Observation Procedures in the Research Site**

On arrival at the schools, I was met by my informants who were either heads of the department or members of the school administration. Since they already knew about my research from previous communication, I simply used the opportunity to establish rapport with them. They then took me to the classrooms and introduced me to the professors. I left it up to the professors to decide where I should position

myself in the classroom, at what point the consent forms were to be given to students for signature and whether or not they would like me to personally tell the students about my research.

I adopted a fly-on-the wall, non-participant observer approach. For the Literature and Academic Writing classes, I used two *Olympus* voice digital recorders, which are no bigger than the average mobile phone and therefore quite inconspicuous. I placed one on top of the teacher's desk and I positioned the other one where I was seated. I had considered videotaping the proceedings but that would have been at the risk of being disruptive. The students seemed shy and conscious of my presence. I took detailed notes during the sessions and engaged in informal chats with the teachers and students outside the classroom. I did not make an audio recording of the informal interviews but made notes of the information after the interaction.

I listened to the data either immediately after the classes or at the end of the day. The voice recorder allowed me to store data on separate folders which helped me manage the data efficiently. I uploaded the data onto the audio software which was stored in a password protected laptop to ensure security.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

Brown and Levinson's lexico-grammatical model is used as the main framework for analysis, combined with a context-sensitive approach and supplemented by a pragmatically-informed discourse analysis. Before I proceed, I examine the role that *context* plays in the analysis.

#### **4.2.1 What is Data: The Role of Context**

Context, in the field of sociolinguistics, is conventionally seen as linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena that surround a particular linguistic feature or utterance; aspects of it tend to be prioritised depending on the type of study (Swann *et al.* 2004, p.50). One view comes from a Conversation Analysis (CA) perspective which focuses on the micro-structural aspects of talk based on the dynamics of turn-taking (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974, Eggins and Slade 1997, Hutchby and Wooffit 2001). In CA, context is talk-intrinsic where talk is seen as creating its own context so that each utterance serves as the context for the next and so on. External factors such as cultural context are considered unimportant unless the participants invoke them during the conversation (Roberts *et.al.* 1992).

In stark contrast is a view of context from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which tends to prioritise external elements that CA considers unimportant (unless speakers make them relevant). CDA posits that the micro-interactions of everyday life are inextricable from the larger, macro structures of the society in general.

Blommaert (2001, p.1) states that CA and CDA treatments of context are both flawed: whereas in CDA, contextual information that should be scrutinised is often accepted as 'mere facts'; in CA, context is reduced to observable and demonstrably consequential features of talk. It has been argued that CA's talk-intrinsic notion of context needs to be combined with CDA's approach of acknowledging socio-cultural

and situational factors (see Thornborrow 2002, Davis 1988). As Davis (1988, p.59) notes:

Descriptions of conversational openings or variations in the way turns are taken, interruptions made, utterances repaired and the like are incomplete unless they are considered in the light of who is allowed to do what and who is, in fact, doing it.

A similar position is taken up by Duranti and Goodwin (1992, p.3) who argue that context is a 'juxtaposition' of the focal event and the field of action where the particular event is embedded. They emphasise the mutually reflexive relationship between context and talk in the sense that "talk shapes context and context shapes talk." Thus, the notion of context adopted in the current study is that it includes relevant external factors and the talk-intrinsic aspects of the interaction. Data will include field notes and audio recording juxtaposed with the participants' social and hierarchical roles, and institutional and national culture that might be of relevance to the interpretation.

#### ***4.2.2 Power and Critical Discourse Analysis***

This study is about power and politeness in the classroom, and CDA is often associated with the study of power in discourse. With its socio-political stance and a commitment to interventionism, CDA aims to uncover "social power abuse, dominance and inequality" (Van Dijk 2001, p.352). Its critics point out, however,

that when power is used as the main category for interpretation, the immediate context and other potentially relevant aspects might be overlooked (Vine 2004).

CDA as a total approach is not being used in this study because I do not want to start from *a priori* assumptions about power relations. Furthermore, it would seem inappropriate if I took a critical stance against my informants (both in higher management positions). This does not mean that data analysis and interpretation are compromised. What it means is that I see my role as a researcher, not as social critic or political commentator with commitments to interventionism.

#### **4.2.3 Data Management and Coding: Categories of Analysis**

The Brown and Levinson categories of analysis consists of fifteen PP strategies, ten NP strategies and fifteen off-record strategies as shown below:

Negative Politeness	Positive Politeness	Off –record
<p><b>Be direct</b></p> <p>1: Be conventionally indirect</p> <p><b>Don’t presume/assume</b></p> <p>2: Question, hedge</p> <p><b>Don’t coerce H</b></p> <p>3: Be pessimistic</p> <p>4: Minimize the imposition</p> <p>5: Give deference</p> <p><b>Communicate S’s want not to impinge on H</b></p> <p>6: Apologize</p> <p>7: Impersonalize S and H</p> <p>8: State the FTA as a general rule</p> <p>9: Nominalize</p> <p><b>Redress other wants of H’s</b></p> <p>10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding H</p>	<p><b>Claim Common Ground</b></p> <p>1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)</p> <p>2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)</p> <p>3: Intensify interest to H</p> <p>4: Use in-group identity markers</p> <p>5: Seek agreement</p> <p>6: Avoid disagreement</p> <p>7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground</p> <p>8: Joke</p> <p><b>Convey that S and H are co-operators</b></p> <p>9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants</p> <p>10: Offer, promise</p> <p>11: Be optimistic</p> <p>12: Include both S and H in the activity</p> <p>13: Give (or ask for) reasons</p> <p>14: Assume or assert reciprocity</p> <p><b>Fulfil H’s wants</b></p> <p>15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)</p>	<p><b>Invite conversational implicatures</b></p> <p>1: Give hints</p> <p>2: Give association clues</p> <p>3: Presuppose</p> <p>4: Understate</p> <p>5: Overstate</p> <p>6: Use tautologies</p> <p>7: Use contradictions</p> <p>8: Be ironic</p> <p>9: Use metaphors</p> <p>10: Use rhetorical questions</p> <p><b>Be vague or ambiguous: violate the manner maxim</b></p> <p>11: Be ambiguous</p> <p>12: Be vague</p> <p>13: Over-generalize</p> <p>14: Displace H</p> <p>15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis</p>

**Figure 1:** Brown and Levinson’s strategies for redressing FTAs. ‘S’ refers to Speaker and ‘H’ to Hearer.



I had initially planned to code the data in three stages: first by counting the number of turns made by professors to students, students to professors and then students to other students; the second stage was to identify the speech acts encoded in the turns that are considered face-threatening; and the third stage would have been to code the strategy used according to NP, PP and off-record. However, even in the initial stages of coding, it became apparent that the exchanges were very teacher-centred - with professors asking the questions and students providing answers. It did not seem a worthwhile exercise to simply count the number of turns. I then tried coding according to moves based on the three-part Sinclair-Coulthard model (1975) but cutting up the discourse according to a neat Initiation-Response-Follow up proved to be very problematic. Some of the stretches of discourse did not lend themselves to an orderly I-R-F tripartite. I therefore carried out a manual coding based on Brown and Levinson's classification of bald-on record, on-record with PP, on-record with NP and off record strategy present in the whole corpus.

I based my unit of analysis on the concept of 'elicitation sequence' which in the current study is a completed interaction sequence between professors and students consisting of a directive in the form of a question and the accompanying response. Due to the institutional nature of the discourse, it can be argued that a question is a type of directive demanding an action in the form of a response (Dalton-Puffer and Nikula 2006, p.243)

An example of a two-part 'elicitation sequence' is shown on the extract below. It consists of a directive question and a reply.

Figure 2 Example of a Two-Part Elicitation: Q (Question) and R (Reply)

Bald	Pos.	Neg.	Off-rec	
X				Q P2: What is the main reason why we end up polluting the water?
				S1: (raises hand)
				P2: Yes, M_____ (motions for student to give answer)
X				R S1: (replies) Ignorance.
X				Q P2: What else?
X				R S2: Neglect
X				R S3: Greed!
X				Q P2: And then too many demands on the - the limited resource is water certainly we cannot drink the water in the ocean, why?
X				R S2 Salt!

In the corpus, other elicitation sequences consisted of three parts: a *question (Q)*, *reply(R)* and an *evaluative comment(E)* from the teacher.

Figure 3 Example of a Three-part Sequence (Question, Reply, and Evaluation)

Bald	Pos.	Neg.	Off-rec	
X				Q P3 kita nyo na error ninyo? ((Do you realise your error?))
X				R S puro error nga ((Lots of errors, in fact))
	X Strategy 15			E P3 <u>it's ok beginner kayo</u> ((It's ok, you're beginners))
X				Q P3 <i>Eton a</i> – is coughing related to smoking? ((here it comes))
				R Ss (SILENCE)
X				Q P3 are you able to identify your errors?
X				R Ss Yesss (Chorus)
	X Strategy 2			E P3 so it's good that we accept our errors.

### 4.3 Overview of Politeness Strategies in the Three Classrooms

Figure 4 shows an overview of the three classes observed. It should be noted that P1 and P2 teach in UPA<sup>3</sup>, a private university located in urban metro Manila. P3 teaches for CPN, a private college outside of the capital. English is the official medium of

<sup>3</sup> Names of schools are pseudonyms

instruction although some code-switching (into Tagalog, the common linguistic background) is not an uncommon practice.

	Subject	Student Profile
<b>P1</b> (Professor 1) Male	Literature	14 Students: 7 Males, 7 Females Age: 16-20
<b>P2</b> (Professor 2) Female	Academic Writing	13 Students: 13 Males, 1 Female Age: 16-20
<b>P3</b> (Professor 3) Female	Foundation of Nursing	41 Students: 6 Males, 35 Females Age: 16-20

*Figure 4: Overview of the three classes observed*

All classes observed were teacher-centered. P1 and P2 used a discussion type discovery approach where they asked all the questions and the students gave prompt replies. During both visits, P1’s class was discussing a classic novel and a selection of English poems. P2 was using an article on water conservation to unpack the components of an argumentative essay as well as to teach students how to write one. During the first observation, P3 was giving a lecture using overhead transparencies (OHT) as teaching aid. She would read off the OHT, summarize relevant points and encourage students to ask questions. On the second visit, P3 had the students prepare meals in the school kitchen for hypothetical patients with special needs.

In all the classes observed, bald on-record elicitation sequences were used most frequently. This can be expected from the institutional context of the discourse. As Dalton-Puffer & Nikula (2006, p.244) claim,

transmission and/or co-construction of knowledge is so central to the teacher's job description that there are two acts of interpersonal communication which are completely sanctioned by the purpose of the institution: giving information and demanding information about the student's state of mind or state of knowledge.

It can be inferred from the bald-on record usage that curricular content questions carry little face threat. When mitigating face threats, PP, more than NP, was used more frequently by all three professors. Students oriented towards NP through the use of address forms like *ma'm*, *miss* or *sir* and hedges (e.g. *I guess*, *I think*, *perhaps*, *maybe*, *in my view only*) especially when expressing their opinions.

As shown below, the three professors used more bald-on record followed by PP and then NP. It should be pointed out that P3 has the least number of elicitation sequences because, as mentioned above, she lectured using an overhead transparency for uninterrupted periods of time lasting for about 20 minutes. She then opened the floor for questions and elaborations. There were several "silent" episodes of 15 to 20 minutes long when students were copying notes off the OHT.

**Table 1: Professor 1, UPA**

Bald on Record	139	71%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	48	24%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	10	5%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>197</b>	100%

**Table 2:      Professor 2, UPA**

Bald on Record	71	42%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	63	37%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	35	21%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>169</b>	100%

**Table 3:      Professor 3, CPN**

Bald on Record	24	42%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	12	37%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	2	21%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>38</b>	100%

Figure 3 below gives a breakdown of the specific PP and NP strategies used by all three professors:

	P1	P2	P3
PP	Humour*, intensify interest to H, use of in-group identity markers	Humour*, avoid disagreement, notice/attend to H	Give gift (sympathy) to H, avoid disagreement
NP	Hedge, be conventionally indirect	Hedge, be conventionally indirect, minimize imposition	Hedge
Off – record	(no occurrence of this strategy found)	Give association clues	Be ironic

**Figure 5: Frequent Strategies used by P1, P2 and P3. The more general term ‘humour’ is being used instead of Brown and Levinson’s ‘joke.’**

*Humour* was extensively used in P1’s class, with *intensifying interest* and *using in-group identity markers* as the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> preferred strategy (see Appendix 5 for

samples of humorous extracts). All 15 of Brown and Levinson's PP strategies were present in P2's class with *humour*, *avoiding disagreement* and *noticing/attending to H* as the three most frequently used. P3's most frequent strategies were *giving the gift of sympathy* and *avoiding disagreement*.

Brown and Levinson identified 10 NP strategies as shown in Figure 1, however, only three types were found in the data – be conventionally indirect, question/hedge and minimize the imposition. This probably reflects the relative informality of the classes (further evidenced by the use of humour as a PP strategy). As Holmes (1995, p.20) claims, negative politeness strategies are used more often in formal situations whereas positive politeness devices tend to occur in intimate and more informal situations.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, positive face want refers to the need to belong, whereas negative face want refers to the need to be left alone. In broad terms, Brown and Levinson consider PP as 'polite friendly' and NP as 'polite formal.' Figure 3 then indicates that the professors invoke friendliness and closeness, more than they do formality and distance.

#### **4.4 Professors, Power and their Use of Politeness Strategies**

A fine-grained analysis is necessary to unpack how power negotiates symmetry and asymmetry through the use of linguistic politeness. As Locher (2004, p.2) notes:

(...) power (...) reflects the degree of solidarity between interactants. One may, for example, exercise power merely to prove that one is in a more powerful position, thus emphasising difference. Or one may show restraint in the way power is exercised, taking the addressee's face needs into consideration and thus indicating some degree of solidarity as well.

In the classroom, teachers can seldom avoid performing functions that may be face threatening to their students; a few of which are error correction, giving feedback or evaluation, handling/expressing disagreement, demanding display of knowledge and giving homework. Below, I discuss some specific instances of FTAs related to these typical teaching tasks and how they are redressed.

#### **4.4.1. Example 1:      Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback**

The example below illustrates how P1, a male professor, typically corrects a 'mistake' in his class. P1 was asking a student (S), a male, about his interpretation of a poem.

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | S1 | erm, I think it's the sunset <sup>4</sup>  |
| 2 | P1 | sunset?  |
| 3 | S  | because erm the stars that shine on Milky Way it symbolises the<br>sun rise or sun = |
| 4 | P  | =sun?  |
| 5 | S  | it says "along the margin of a bay so it's setting =                                 |
| 6 | P  | =what's setting  |

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<sup>4</sup> Transcription conventions are in Appendix 4



- 7 S =the sun
- 8 P the sun is setting,
- 9 S1 'they stretched in never-ending line' means the rays of the sun?
- 10 P wait, so would you say they stretched, the sun's rays? What is 'they?'
- 11 S2 flowers?
- 12 P huh?
- 13 S2 flowers?
- 14 P the FLOWERS! 'they' is the flowers right? 'stretched in never-
- 15 ending line' what what is 'continuous as the stars' literally what?
- 16 S2 the daffodils
- 17 P the flowers again! Ok?

P1's utterance in line 2 '*sunset*' is an implied challenge to S1's interpretation using 'lexical repetition' which according to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.112) can be used to stress interest and to show that one has heard correctly (strategy 1 'notice/attend to H'). It can also be P1's way of giving S1 a chance to re-think his answer. It can be inferred from S1's justification in line 3 that he took P1's repetition as a challenge. In lines 4, 6 and 9 P1, continues without giving the correct answer. In lines 11 and 16, S2 gives out the correct interpretation and P1 confirms that indeed, the correct answer is '*flowers*.' P1's tag questions '*right*' in line 14 and '*ok?*' in line 17 can be interpreted as PP devices, that of seeking agreement. While on the topic of the same poem, P1 asks the students to interpret the figurative use of '*wealth*' in the poem, but as can be seen below; he did not offer a correction but instead revoiced S3's answer in 2. He added the question word '*why*' to scaffold the

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student to the more correct answer, but was just met with silence in line 3. Perhaps to save S3's face, P1 in line 5 acknowledges and partially agrees with S3's reply with a hedged '*but it's more than just that.*'

- 1      S3      pleasure?
- 2      P1      pleasure? why?
- 3      S3      (silence) (.3)
- 4      P1      ok when you see something nice, sure, pleasure
- 5              but it's more than just that,

Immediately after having committed FTAs when correcting the two students above, P1 closed the interaction by a PP oriented redress. He said that the poem was really about invoking happy memories when one is feeling sad.

- 1      P1      what do you call that a memory candy or something your happy candy
- 2              your thought candy or something, it's something he can pull out of his
- 3              memory bank when he's getting low or feeling bored, think back, do
- 4              you guys do that?

Above, P1 used several markers of PP: 'strategy 4, in-group language or slang (*memory/happy candy* is a term commonly used by young Filipinos) thereby claiming common ground; use of '*you guys*' which presupposes familiarity softening an FTA, use of vague language (*something*) which relies on the 'inevitable association with shared knowledge' (p.111) and bald on-record '*think back*' which carries an intimate, familiar tone. Bringing up the topic of '*memory candy*' is another

PP strategy – ‘to seek agreement by raising safe topics’ (p. 112). As Brown and Levinson claim, ‘the more the speaker knows about the hearer, the more close to home will be the safe topics he can pursue with the hearer’ (ibid). Evidence that the above PP strategies were meant to be restorative was when P1 nominated the two students whose interpretations he corrected to talk about their ‘*happy candy*.’

#### 4.4.2 Example 2: Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback

Below, P2 was asking a display question where she already knows the answer.

- |   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | P  | where does that water come from?  |
| 2 | S  | the ocean   |
| 3 | P  | the ocean?  |
| 4 | S  | [the river]   |
| 5 | S  | [rivers]  |
| 6 | P  | = but, you’re <u>TAKING up Biology right?</u> you talk about water cycle, |
| 7 |    | where does the water come from?   |
| 8 | Ss | the rains!  |
| 9 | P  | the RAINS! <u>CORRECT!</u>  |

P2 first uses lexical repetition in line 3 to indirectly suggest that the answer was incorrect. In line 6, after two consecutive wrong answers, she switched to an off-record strategy 2 ‘give association clues.’ ‘*You’re taking up Biology*’ implies that students should know the correct answer. This can also be interpreted as mild disapproval or ‘off-record sarcasm’ (p.220). P2’s strategy worked as students, in

unison, gave the correct answer. In line 6, P2 restores the possible FTA in line 6 by resorting to PP 'strategy 2' of 'exaggerating approval' (p.104) by way of a very animated intonation in line 9. She used a similar strategy later on in the same lesson:

P2     AYAN! I was waiting for that answer,

Ayan is a Tagalog word which roughly translates into 'that's it right there' which is an exaggerated approval, PP strategy 2, made more emphatic by the use of the vernacular.

#### **4.4.3 Example 3: Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback**

In this Nursing class at CPN, the P3, a female professor was giving a lecture using an overhead projector. The extracts below were from my notes. I was asked not to make an audio recording because it made the students uncomfortable.

- 1       P3     are you able to differentiate the error as well as correct?
- 2       Ss     (silence)
- 3       P3     Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ if you are involved how would you react?
- 4       S1     (silence)
- 5       P3     THIS, is how you will react! (while pointing to the answer on the
- 6             board). Mahirap talaga.((It's really difficult)) Anxiety is normal.
- 7             Your anxiety fires you up to study di b a?((don't you think?))

P3 wanted to make sure that the students understood the content. Her question in line 1 is met by silence so she nominates a male student who remained silent. P3 gives the correct answer written on the overhead transparency. It can be inferred that line 5 is face-threatening because of the PP redress in lines 6 and 7. By saying *'This is how you will react!'* P3 was giving the whole class a severely face-threatening reproach. The implication is that the students should know the answer because it had just been explained (the overhead transparency was still displayed on the whiteboard). To heal the damaged faces, P3 suddenly code-switches to the vernacular *'mahirap talaga'* which is PP strategy 5 'give gift (sympathy) to H' (p.102) and strategy 4 'use in-group dialect' Using *'di ba'* is PP strategy 6 'avoid disagreement.'

It is noteworthy that P3 performed the severe FTA in English which might have a distancing effect and the redress in Tagalog which invokes solidarity and familiarity. The switching from English to Tagalog allowed her to navigate between being 'in' and 'out' of the group.

#### **4.4.4 Giving orders/request/advice**

In classrooms, directives such as 'turn to page 130' or 'listen' are commonly used without any need for mitigation. It would be unusual if a professor tells her students, 'could you perhaps possibly turn to page 130, please?' In the corpus, all three professors used unmediated directives like 'copy this,' 'think back,' and 'remember.'

Towards the end of the class, P1 tells his class to write their reflections on their journals:

- 1      P1      Let's get your notebooks and give us your reflections for the day
- 2              about our theme and erm tomorrow I want you to have read the next
- 3              two chapters in (???)

P1 uses '*let's*', '*us*' and '*our*' to mitigate the directive and to indicate that teacher and students are co-operators (strategy 12 'include both S and H in the activity'). He gives the homework hedged (NP strategy 2) by the use of "I want" instead of a direct 'read the next two chapters.'

At the time of my observation, there was no mention of homework in P3's class. Below is from P2 who took a several-step process in giving homework.

*Extract 4.4.4.1: Paving the ground for an FTA*

- 1      P2      so, question, 'am I going to write a *ten-page* essay for my
- 2              argumentative essay to persuade?' the answer is no, ok?
- 3      S      ok twenty? (in a light-hearted tone)
- 4      Ss      (laughter)
- 5      P2      (laughs) NOT twenty, twenty is already a research paper
- 6      Ss      (laughter)

Line 1 above illustrates P2's use of linguistic resources to attend to the negative and positive face wants of her students. By using active voicing 'am I going to write...' she is presupposing to know what her students' concerns are (PP strategy 9). Her choice of the word 'ten' (ten-page essay) is NP strategy 4 'minimise the size of the

imposition (which will become clearer in the next example). In effect, she has already redressed the face threatening act even before verbalising it. P2 proceeds to deliver her face threatening directive:

*Extract 4.4.4.2: Delivering Redressed FTAs*

7      P2      I want you to write MAY:BE between a three to five page essay,  
8              depends on how heavy your topic was. some people have very  
9              difficult topics, some people have easier ones ok? erm so we will start  
10             doing the writing next week so I want you to start getting getting the  
11             books so that Monday I want you to have the books with you. the only  
12             way to write at all is for you to have the books first ok? so tomorrow  
13             read pages 158 to 160 that's what we will discuss. I hope  
14             we'll end a little bit earlier cuz it's any way a Friday erm ok?

In line 7, P2 says that it is not a *ten* but actually a *three to five page* essay that she wanted students to write – so the ‘hypothetically’ huge imposition in line 1 has been minimised. It is hedged with *maybe* and *I want* which she also used for lines 10 and 11. In line 13, she gave a bald on-record order (*read page 158 to 160*). It can be inferred that she considers the reading assignment not face threatening at all. However in lines 13 and 14 (*I hope we'll end...Friday*) she uses PP strategy 10 ‘give an offer or promise.’ According to Brown and Levinson (p.125), speakers may stress their cooperation with the hearers by claiming that whatever it is the hearers want, they want for them too and will help to obtain it. So, P2 is presupposing that Ss would like to go home earlier on a Friday and she can help make this possible. PP ‘strategy 14, assume or assert reciprocity’ is also contained in lines 13 and 14 by

‘fulfilling H’s want for some X’ (p. 129). So P2 is satisfying her students positive face want by giving them gifts of sympathy, understanding and cooperation.

After line 14 there was a question from the students clarifying when the assignment was due (I did not include this extract). P2 then continues:

*Extract 4.4.4.3: The Penultimate Blow: Negotiating Symmetry*

- 21     P2     I’m just talking about what we will do tomorrow. It’s just one short  
22                essay, three page which I assume we will finish MUCH faster than  
23                the ten-page we did today right? ok ? and I want you to start getting  
24                your sources so that on Monday we have time to take notes in class ok  
25                YOU CAN actually start taking notes erm at home on Saturday and  
26                Sunday while I labour checking your test papers ok coz I still have not  
27                finished the (coughs)  
28                the short seat work I gave so maybe two or three more and then your  
29                actual essays. I normally spend my weekends checking ok (laughs)

Lines 21 to 29 is a mixture of NP and PP to cushion a fairly emphatic directive (using the pronoun *you*), which according to Brown and Levinson is one of the most intrinsically face threatening acts of commanding. Interspersing the utterances with an inclusive *we* attends to solidarity needs of the students. As Brown and Levinson (p.127) state, using an inclusive ‘we’ form when ‘you’ or ‘me’ is meant, ‘call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs.’



Lines 26 and 29 in the example above, can be interpreted as PP strategy 9 ‘assume and assert reciprocity’ (p.129) implying that ‘I’ll do X for you, so do Y for me.’

*Extract 4.4.4.4: Upgraded Face-saving and Face-threat*

The extracts above were from P2’s class on a Thursday. The extracts below were taken the day after, a Friday. P2 refers back to the essay mentioned the day before.

- 1           that, I would like you to do on Monday.
- 2           I’m LETTING you off early, in fact
- 3           half an hour early ok (.3) so that there will be no excuse not to have
- 4           any materials for- on Monday okay you have you have plenty of time
- 5           so get your notes first so by next week you already have an outline.
- 6           We’ll revise your thesis here so that you don’t have to worry about it
- 7           at home. Write your essay Friday Saturday Sunday at home ok,
- 8           So okay that’s our game plan for next week. Ok thank you.

The lines above clearly illustrate how P2’s institutional power as teacher interfaces with politeness. Line 3 embodies P2’s authority with ‘*so that there will be no excuse.*’ Notice that this voice of authority, while carrying force, is still mitigated by the use of a general and agent-less construction. Instead of saying ‘*you won’t have any excuses,*’ P2 uses ‘*there will be no excuse.*’

Line 7 carries the clearest and most face-threatening utterance, bald on-record ‘*write your essay Friday Saturday Sunday at home.*’ This directive is an impingement on

the students' negative face want or the need to be freed from imposition. She ended the session with

P2     So okay that's our game plan for next week.

In the above, '*so*' is used to mark 'pseudo-agreement' when in fact there was none (p.115) and '*our*' implies co-operative effort when the plan seems to be just P2's. It can be argued that the whole utterance '*that's our game plan*' is P2's way of emphasising power; quite similar to the use of tactical summaries in negotiations where one of the parties presents a summing up move that's favourable to their cause and unfavourable to the interlocutor (Charles and Charles 1999,p.74). The use of "game plan" can be interpreted as P2's use of metaphor to call upon solidarity that they are on the same team. It might also have been intended to connote fun (instead of burden) which is what '*game*' brings up.

#### 4.4.5 Checking for understanding

Teachers often check to make sure that students understand the lesson content. Professor 1 used the word "*no*" a few times which is a Tagalog particle that functions as a tag question. For example:

1     P1     Hard to say, *no*? ((isn't it))

P2, on the other hand, frequently used 'ok' with a rising intonation. P3, as the examples will show below, had to perform FTAs to ensure that the students understood the lecture.

- 1      P3      I just hope you know 'TENACIOUS.' *Baka( (maybe))* you write it
- 2                    there without knowing it. *Naintindihan nyo?* ((Do you understand?))
- 3                    *Kasi po mahirap talaga. ((Because **po** it is really difficult)).* You need
- 4                    to know this by heart.

P3 has just finished reading a section from the OHT containing the word 'tenacious'. She was making sure that the students knew what it meant. Her tone sounded to me sarcastic and disapproving. This is lexically signalled by the use of the Pilipino respect particle 'po' in line 3. 'Po' is used to show deference for people who are older or with higher social status/authority. P3 is older and with higher social status and authority so by using 'po' she is conveying an off-record sarcasm (Brown and Levinson p.220), which P3 confirmed in an informal chat after class. In line 2, P3's question '*Naiintinindihan ninyo ito*' which means "Do you understand" is quite direct because of the pronoun 'you.' In the extract below, P3 uses '*Naiintinindihan ninyo ito*' three times. She used 'why' six times with an irritated and frustrated tone.

- 1      P3      WHY, WHY do you need to know these things?
- 2      Ss      (silence)
- 3      P3      why, WHY nursing diagnosis facilitates quality care?
- 4      Ss      (silence)
- 5      P3      WHY WHY do you think? what's nursing diagnosis?

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| 6  |    | <i>NAAINTINDIHAN NINYO BA? Why, NAAINTINDIHAN NINYO BA?</i>                                      |
|    |    | ((do you understand?)) ((do you understand?))  |
| 7  | Ss | (silence)  |
| 8  | P3 | (looking, with raised eyebrows, specifically at one student)                                     |
| 9  | S1 | (stands up) Assessment is importante <i>po. Para</i> makapag-plan.<br>(In order to make a plan)) |
| 10 | P3 | OK exactly! diagnosis will lead to a plan. <i>Naiintindihan ninyo</i><br>((do you understand?))  |
| 11 | Ss | <i>Opo</i> Yes (mixed)   |

P3's repetition of 'why' and tone of voice can be inferred as a demand for an answer which threatens the student's positive and negative face. She downgraded the FTA from line 1 which is a very general question (*Why do you need to know these things*) to being more specific in line 3 (*why, WHY nursing diagnosis facilitates quality care?*) to line 5 hedged by "think" (*WHY WHY do you think?*) She eventually reduced the difficulty of the question to a 'what' (what's nursing diagnosis?) which could be interpreted as pedagogical or as a face-saving move. The lack of response from the students can be face-threatening to P3 and P3's outburst is face-threatening to the students. According to Brown and Levinson (p.66), expression of out-of-control emotions is an FTA to the addressee indicating that 'the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings wants, etc.'

The group's silence can be interpreted as the consolidated power of the class to withhold that ratification. According to Diamond (1996), silence can be used to withhold ratification of the speech act. It can be argued that:

power is shared by all participants in action. Because an actor needs his or her self-image to be ratified, those in the position to ratify it hold power in that they may withhold their ratification and acknowledgement, thus denying someone the successful attainment of leadership or power. (ibid, p.14)

Silence in classrooms is notoriously difficult to analyse. It can be used as a face-saving strategy to avoid criticism or disagreement or an off-record strategy to convey that one does not know the answer (Nakane 2006). It seems to me that the students used silence to protect their own self-esteem. It was big class of 41 students which makes the threat greater. When I asked S1, about the above extract, she said that she needed to participate in class because she was applying for a scholarship and that a certain percentage of the grade is based on class participation.

#### 4.4.6 Handling Disagreement/Challenges from Students

In the next extract, one of P2's students was questioning the idea of using water as fuel in place of gasoline.

- 1        S        but if we're trying to save one resource we end up using another=
- 2        P2        = not really because we're not God we can't create we can
- 3                only convert so if we use one as long as long as we use it
- 4                correctly, I guess which is the whole point of the essay really I don't
- 5                think the essay is saying don't progress (.)I think it's just saying be
- 6                responsible for your actions so you'll have enough to use in the future

- 7            I think the use of water to run cars for instance will end up producing  
8            water vapours which will go back to the water cycle which is not the  
9            same as fossil fuel which is an even more scarce resource.  
10           Did you hear that in the news today it can go up to \$200 a barrel?

S sets up a contradictory view by starting line 1 with '*but*.' P2 offers a reply hedged by '*really*.' S and P2 use the inclusive '*we*' in lines 1 and 2. The reference to God in line 2, works as PP strategy because it appeals to common ground. P2 mitigates her opinion by using I '*(don't) think*' and '*I guess*' as NP strategy 2 'hedge' to signal that she is not imposing her views on the students. P2's use of NP is perhaps a preventative move to avoid disagreement. Her use of the second pronoun in line 6 can be inferred as PP device by emphasising the direct beneficiary of the action, invoking PP strategy 3 'intensify interest.' In line 10, P2 changes the subject to the price of gas to avoid disagreement and move on to a '*safe topic*,' PP 'strategy 5. Talking about the exorbitant gas prices in the Philippines is one topic that most Filipinos agree about. P2's move to change the topic is an instantiation of power. The data suggest that it is the prerogative of the more powerful interlocutors to decide how long to keep a particular topic on the floor and when a new topic gets taken up.

#### **4.5 Students and Their Use of Politeness Strategies**

Most spoken data from students were in response to teacher questions, which were mostly bald on-record. When expressing opinions or hesitation though, students use negatively polite language perhaps to signal their lack of confidence or uncertainty

about their answers, thus protecting their self esteem. It can also be seen as respect for the negative face of other students by not imposing their opinion on them.

#### 4.5.1 Deference and Hedging

Two of the most common strategies used are deference by way of address forms ‘ma’m, miss or sir,’ (NP strategy 5) and the use of the Tagalog respect particle “*po*” (observed only at CPN). The Tagalog hedge word ‘*parang*’ (roughly equivalent to the verb ‘seem’ or ‘seems as if’) was observed being used six times as a code-switch (3x in P2’s class and 6x in P1’s class). It is used as a hedging device, thus NP strategy 2. It is noteworthy that all instances of ‘*parang*’ co-occurred with ‘sir’ in P1’s class as below:

sir erm Svidrigailov (...) and *parang* trying to prevent her marriage

sir, he’s *parang* he’s not cuz (...)

sir, *parang* giving the reason to drink more

The co-occurrence of ‘sir’ with “*parang*” is complex to interpret. Using my native speaker intuition, it signals not only hedging but also a “humbling” of the speaker’s opinion. Adding ‘*sir*’ to the whole utterance invokes deference as well as affection.

#### 4.5.2 Symmetric Interaction: Students to Students

There was little verbal exchange observed between students. This is perhaps due to the teacher-centred structure where professors control and distribute speaking rights. I had one opportunity to observe nursing students in a cooking class at CPN. They used Tagalog to address each other. Below is an exchange between two female students.

S1     Ate, paano ba mag-gisa?  
         ((Big sister, how do I sauté?))

S2     O, eto, ganito ang gawin mo?  
         ((Look here, do it this way))

Although the two are not related, S1 addresses S2 (who appeared older than S1) as *ate* or big sister. The word *ate* simultaneously signals respect and solidarity while invoking responsibility. As *ate* or big sister, the person being addressed is expected to care for the younger one, and the younger one in turn is to show deference to the older addressee. S2's response is an unmitigated directive which indicates familiar, intimate relationship with the addressee.

#### 4.6 Summing up Data Collection and Analysis

In this chapter, I explained how I used non-participant observation method to collect data through audio recording and field notes. A context-sensitive data analysis show



that the three professors used PP more than NP when redressing face threatening acts such as correcting a mistake or giving homework. Students on the other hand used NP in the form of hedging when dealing with professors. In the one class observed where students had the opportunity to interact with each other, students used the vernacular creatively to invoke deference and solidarity at the same time.

## **CHAPTER 5                    INTERPRETING THE DATA**

In the previous chapter, the general hypothesis being tested was that professors, who have more relative power defined as “the degree to which individuals can impose their plans and evaluation at the expense of other people’s plans and evaluation” (Brown and Levinson, p.77), will have less need to for mitigation when performing an FTA; students with less power will use more polite language. This chapter answers the research questions posed in Chapter 2 and discusses the main findings in light of the theory and relevant literature.

### **5.1    Linguistic markers of politeness: How professors use them to construct relations.**

The data show that PP is the overwhelming strategy preferred by all three professors. This is closely tied with power because it is usually the privilege of the more powerful interlocutor to ‘come closer’ to the less powerful; not the other way around. In Rees-Miller (2000), the professors tended to use PP strategies like humour and positive comments when disagreeing with students. This is attributed to the professors’ desire to enhance the face of the students and to encourage them to participate in class. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) report similar findings – that high status professors seemed to be as concerned with solidarity as much as avoiding impositions. Morand (1996, p.551) claims that power works as some sort of ‘license’ for using PP. This type of politeness observed in Philippine classrooms is also consistent with what Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.56) refer to as ‘hierarchical

politeness system' where "the person in the superordinate upper position uses involvement strategies in speaking *down*" (PP in Brown and Levinson terms) and "the person in the subordinate or lower position uses independence strategies (NP in Brown and Levinson terms) in speaking *up*"

Based on Brown and Levinson's politeness model, those in positions of more power will have less need for mitigation. This seems partially borne out as the three professors relied on PP which is considered less polite than NP. It still warrants scrutiny why professors who are institutionally sanctioned to issue directives need to use linguistic politeness. Based on Brown and Levinson's theory, the main motivation would be to satisfy the addressees' need to belong (positive face) and the need to be left alone (negative face). But this is where the theory seems inadequate; it constrains the analysis and fails to exhaust other plausible interpretations. Polite language can be deployed for other reasons. For one, as Bradac and Ng (1993, p.7) claim, it makes ordering someone to do something more 'palatable.' Indeed, Holmes *et.al.* (1999, p.355) argue that manipulative transactional intent can be sugar-coated with politeness. Humour, for example, which was frequently used by P1 and P2, can be a way of doing power less explicitly making it "more acceptable in context where informality is valued and status differences are played down" (Holmes 2000, p.176).

Holmes and Stubbe (2003, p.40) state that those with institutional power and authority try to achieve a balance between getting people to do a good job and showing consideration for their feelings. This seems consistent with Koester (2006, p.115) who claims that "getting someone to perform an action –creates a discursive

imbalance which the discursively dominant speaker often seems to try to offset by using relational strategies (...).”

On the basis of the data collected, I would argue that professors use linguistic politeness to ‘elasticise’ the fixedness or given-ness of their institutional power. Linguistic devices give them a communicative resource to slide up and down the power scale. Takano (2005, p.656) claims that Japanese women in powerful executive positions deploy a similar strategy:

Using downward shifts (...) allows the speaker to deny her formal figure as a superior and descend to the level of the subordinates, by which her illocutionary intention is likely to obtain willing support and empathy from her peers. In using upward shifts (...) on the other hand, the speaker deliberately detaches herself from in group solidarity (...) and brings her institutional role and identity back to the surface to obtain formal power.

In other words, professors may use PP to be seen as one with the students, thus enhancing cooperation; at other times they may highlight institutional power, thus emphasizing distance and ensuring that students fulfill school requirements. Linguistic politeness allows them to go ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the group, enabling them to shift identities - professor to friend to professor again and so on depending upon the goals of the interaction.

## **5.2 Linguistic markers of politeness: How students use them with professor/other students to construct relations**

Brown and Levinson consider NP to be more polite than PP, and usually characterises the speech of lower ranking actors when addressing someone of higher status. The data show very few student-initiated questions and there was no overt disagreement with a professor or with another student. The mere absence of disagreement is in itself a reason for closer analysis. Is it a sign of respect for the professor, or possibly an indication of high value placed on group harmony? Or do Filipino students take the professor's word as 'gospel truth'? This does not seem to be the case. It turns out that there are other avenues for students to communicate with their professors apart from the classroom hour. For example, immediately after P2's class, one student approached her expressing dissatisfaction with the reading material used that day. This suggests that Brown and Levinson's "Don't do the FTA" strategy needs to be qualified into "Don't do the FTA in the presence of witnesses and overhearers." Giving negative feedback is arguably more face-threatening to both student and teacher in the presence of observers.

P1's students use a journal to record their thoughts and reflections. This is one way they communicate with the professor without having to worry about being the centre of attention in class. They also have access to an on-line discussion group set up by P1. Through this discussion group, students have the chance to express their views without the potential threat associated with face to face interaction.

Culture might also be an explanatory variable. The Filipinos' deeply held values of respect for authority (Pe-Pua and Protacio Marcelino 2000), harmony (Mercado 1994) and the teacher's 'supremacy' in the classroom (Licuanan 1994) are perhaps reflected in the way higher education discourse is played out.

Another possible explanation for the absence of overt disagreement can be attributed to the presence of the researcher. Students might have been more self-conscious than usual knowing that the proceedings were being audio recorded. Since I was only on-site for two visits, they did not get the opportunity to get used to my presence.

### **5.3 Factors that influence the choice of politeness markers**

The data suggest that there are other factors, namely; pedagogical goal, curriculum content and interactional context that exert an impact on linguistic politeness.

P1, apart from humour, used *intensifying interest* and *in-group identity markers* as main devices. It seems appropriate considering that he was trying to get the students interested in reading modern literature and poetry. His use of in-group markers (Tagalog particles used as tag, informal and familiar language) serves to encourage his young students to express their interpretations without fear of embarrassment. P1 needs to nurture critical thinking in his students and build their confidence in interpreting literary pieces; therefore, blatant correction would have been counterproductive. The nature of the subject taught makes the rightness or wrongness of an elucidation subject to negotiation. This is consistent with Rees-Miller (2000) whose findings indicate that pedagogical context, besides face maintenance concerns

tied to power differential influence the linguistic realisation of the speech act of disagreement.

P2 used humorous jokes and anecdotes that are jointly collaborated with her students. Her extensive use of mixed PP strategies can be partially explained by her pedagogical goal. Unlike P1, she was not merely asking the student to display their knowledge; she was 'ordering' them to write an essay. Request for action carries more imposition and thus more face-threatening than request for information; therefore more redress is required. Furthermore, what made the imposition weightier is the fact that it needed to be done outside of classroom hours over a summer weekend.

P3 used *giving gift of sympathy* and *avoiding disagreement* as preferred PP strategy. Although she used more directives compared to P1 and P2, she also used sympathy-giving more frequently. P3 is a practicing nurse which enables her to relate to her students easily. Her strategy use of *avoiding disagreement* was signalled through the use of tag questions and *raising of safe topics*.

Interactional or situational context has been shown to influence the choice of linguistic devices. Bald on-record which is the least polite in Brown and Levinson's model can be the most polite thing in some contexts, for example in P3's class of nursing students. As Brown and Levinson claim, one of the payoffs for going on record is avoiding being misunderstood. In the previous chapter, we have seen how P3 threatened the positive face of her students by using off-record sarcasm and disapproval. To add a bit of contextualisation, it needs pointing out that P3 was very

disappointed with her students' poor performance in the exam given a few days before data collection. The implications of the exam results are serious – for one, the students might not qualify for professional certification; more importantly, patients' lives can be endangered if students make mistakes. P3 had discussed the disappointing test results with the students and had emphasised to them the necessity of asking questions in class to make sure things are clear. This explains the face threatening, emotionally loaded stance of '*naiintindihan nyo?*' ((do you understand?))

On the basis of P3's class in particular, I would argue that linguistic (im)politeness cannot be adequately assessed by using Brown and Levinson's variables of power, distance and imposition. Situation-specific interpretation is necessary in order to analyse the data accurately. Evidently, (in comparison with P1 and P2) there is a world of difference between teaching students how to interpret poems or write essays and showing them how to perform life-saving procedures.



## CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS

### 6.1 Summary of Findings

The main findings in this study can be summarised as follows:

1. The professors in the study used bald on-record language to ask lesson-related questions. This indicates that such type of request for information is not considered face-threatening. However, they used a mix of face-saving strategies, although more PP than NP, when performing potentially face-threatening acts of correcting a mistake, giving feedback, handling disagreement, checking for understanding and giving homework.
2. Students generally used bald-on record and NP when answering lesson-related questions. NP was realised through the use of formal address forms, respect particle and hedging.
3. Findings suggest that institutional power influence the choice of linguistic markers. The high power professors used PP when performing potential FTAs towards the lower power students. As stated in Chapter 2, PP is usually a prerogative of the more powerful interlocutors. They have the option to initiate solidarity and invite informality but usually not the lower power speakers. The students oriented towards NP, which is more polite than PP.

4. Other factors that seem to influence linguistic politeness are pedagogical goals, lesson content, and interactional or situational context. From the students' perspective, the presence and/or number of overhearers also seem to be a factor. There are other aspects that might affect linguistic politeness such as gender, personality, ethno-cultural background, education, social class, regional/national and school culture and even mood; however it is not within the scope of this study to analyse the data against those variables.

5. Teacher-student role in the classroom appear to be relatively fixed; teacher asks questions and students respond; teachers control turn-taking and allocate communicative resources. The institutional asymmetry seem unchallenged by students although as stated in the previous chapter, they have other avenues that allow them to communicate with their professors in a less face-threatening way such as through one-to-one consultations, on-line discussion groups and journaling.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There are several theoretical and methodological concerns that need to be raised.

Firstly, Brown and Levinson's model was a useful, albeit inadequate, tool of analysis. It sharpened the focus on the micro-interactional functions of classroom talk. However, it had to be extended to handle discourse level (instead of speech-act/sentence level) analysis. More importantly, even Brown and Levinson's extensive list of strategies cannot account for everything that was going on. To interpret the multi-faceted social relations between professors and students, it was necessary to

include context-specific elements gathered from observation and informal chats with participants. I find the theory's over-reliance on face-saving and conflict-avoidance limiting because other factors for committing or redressing an FTA are underplayed. Despite its shortcomings, I believe that Brown and Levinson's model is flexible enough so that it can serve as a basic descriptive format useful for cross-cultural comparisons. But then as May (1997, p. 40) posits, "social life itself is diverse and complicated and perhaps, therefore, not amenable to understanding through the use of a single theoretical paradigm."

Secondly, the observed data does not include non-verbal clues such as gesture, facial expressions and gaze. Since I had to sit either at the front or at the very back of the classrooms, my view was severely limited. Video recording might have been helpful but it would have been at the risk of being disruptive.

Thirdly, despite having used two digital recorders (one near where the teacher was sitting and another at the back of the room), they could not capture the nuanced aspects of the discourse. Part of the reason is background noise (from air-conditioners and/or ceiling fans, other students in the hallway, etc.). This has seriously limited the interpretative base because para-linguistic signals like initial "erm" or "but" in the "yeah, but..." may have been missed. Subtle hesitation markers can serve as important clues and spell the difference between a mitigated or unmitigated FTA.

Another limitation is the unequal distribution and quantity of teacher versus student talk. This has resulted in more focus on teacher utterances. Students only spoke when

nominated and even when answering questions, their replies were limited and non-elaborative.

Lastly, the issue of reactivity needs to be addressed. How much of an effect did my presence have on the data? When I asked one of the professors if what I had observed was typical, he said “more or less.” He had told the students to speak in English only (instead of mixing it with Tagalog) during the observation. This might have changed the data because code-switching is one of the communicative strategies under scrutiny. Another possible ‘contaminant’ to naturalistic data is my entry point. I gained access through high level management which may have made the teachers self-conscious, if not suspicious. Due to time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to build rapport with the teachers before observation. To decrease the effects of reactivity, it would be ideal to observe the classes over a longer period of time so teachers and students will get used to my presence.

### **6.3 Future Research**

Analysis was based on speaker output. Whether the hearers, perceive the utterance as polite is another story. As Eelen (2001, p.96) indeed, points out “the production of behaviour by a speaker and evaluation of that behaviour by a hearer” are both essential elements of the communicative encounter. Therefore, more valuable insights can be gained from including both speaker and hearer in future research.

Spoken language has been privileged in the current research as a key to understanding social interaction. However, as Atkinson (2005, p.7) claims, “there is

a clear danger of treating language analysis as being self-contained and self-justifying activity.” Having carried out this investigation has for me underscored the importance of taking a multi-disciplinary and context-sensitive approach which can account for the shifting dynamics of social interaction. For future research, I would adopt a theoretical and methodological stance that would combine interactional sociolinguistics with ethnography so that a more robust view of context, including the social, cultural, historical and political, can be taken into account.

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## APPENDIX 1      INFORMATION SHEET



The Open University

A Study of Communication in University Classrooms  
In the Philippines  
The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

As someone educated in the Philippines, I am interested in carrying out research in order to explore the type of language used by professors and students in higher education classrooms.

If you take part in this study it will help to gain more knowledge and understanding which will benefit educators and students in creating a more effective and dynamic teaching and learning environment. All research participants will receive a brief report on this research, and I will also offer a workshop for any participants who are interested based on my analysis of the data.

I will collect the information by tape-recording classroom interactions (lectures, talks, tutorials) and analyzing them afterwards. The audio recorded data will be treated as confidential and the data will be anonymised in transcription and quotation. If you have some questions about the research, please contact me, Mabelle Victoria at [M.Victoria@open.ac.uk](mailto:M.Victoria@open.ac.uk). If you would like to talk to someone else, please contact either or both of my supervisors whose contact details are outlined below.

If you want to withdraw from the study at any time you are free to do so. At your request, data collected from you will not be transcribed, analyzed or be treated as part of the research data.

Supervisors: Joan Swann ([J.Swann@open.ac.uk](mailto:J.Swann@open.ac.uk)) and Theresa Lillis  
([T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk](mailto:T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk)).

## APPENDIX 2

## CONSENT FORM



The Open University

A Study of Communication in University Classrooms  
In the Philippines

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

### CONSENT FORM

I consent to taking part in Mabel Victoria's study. I understand that the recordings will be treated as confidential and the data will be anonymised in transcription and quotation. I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email or Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3

## REQUEST TO DO RESEARCH



The Open University

### **A Study of Communication in University Classrooms In the Philippines**

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

### **Introduction**

There is a great deal of evidence on the significant role language plays in teaching and learning, in higher education as in other sectors. While studies have been carried out in several countries, there does not seem to be a lot of research on the role of language in higher education in the Philippines. As someone educated in the country, I am interested in carrying out research in this area. My main aim is to understand how language is used in Philippine university classrooms to create effective learning environments. I am doing this research as a full-time PhD student in the Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET) at the Open University, UK (see contact details below).

### **What is involved?**

As a pilot study I am seeking, with permission, to record classroom lessons, talks or seminars involving undergraduate and/or graduate students. I would also like to carry out follow-up interviews with you and perhaps some of your students.

## **Timescale**

The pilot study will take place within a three-week block during the summer term in May 2008.

All research participants will receive a brief report on this research, and I will also offer a workshop for teaching staff and/or students based on my analysis of classroom data. The interaction will be audio recorded and then analyzed using a specific framework of linguistic categories.

## **Further information**

For further information on the research, please contact me by e-mail at the address below:

Contact details: Mabelle Victoria. E-mail: [M.Victoria@open.ac.uk](mailto:M.Victoria@open.ac.uk).

Supervisors: Joan Swann ([J.Swann@open.ac.uk](mailto:J.Swann@open.ac.uk)) and Theresa Lillis ([T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk](mailto:T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk))

## APPENDIX 4

## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(???)	unintelligible text
(word?)	guess at unclear text: e.g. I (apologize?) for the delay in shipment
(.2)	length of pause in seconds
::	noticeable lengthening of a vowel
.	falling intonation at end of tone unit
?	high rising intonation at end of tone unit
,	slightly rising intonation at end of tone unit
!	animated intonation
-	unfinished utterance, e.g., false start
WORD	Words written in capitals to indicate emphatic stress: e.g. VERY
[words]	
[words]	simultaneous speech indicated in brackets: e.g.  A: mm// Did you [read the report]  B: [didn't have] the time
=	latching, no perceptible pause after a turn
(laughs)	single brackets describe current action, transcriber's comments
(( ))	double brackets contain English translation of Pilipino words: e.g.  A: <i>Isulat mo ito.</i>  ((Write this down.))



## APPENDIX 5      EXAMPLES OF HUMOUR

## P1's Class

### Extract 1

P how many think that she she would actually send her man to death than be  
happy with somebody else, but not herself how many would how many  
would actually think of doing that

Ss (a few raised their hands)

P      so if you can't have her no one can?

Ss (laughter)

P Svidrigailovs everywhere! (laughs)

### Extract 2

P What is the price of you reputation 10 M pesos? *Pwede na* ((That's possible))(laughs)

Ss (laughter)

### Extract 3

P     you *guys*, what can you do when you're out of here, finish your studies then  
work then what (.) [that's it?]

S [sir]

P and then you die! (laughs)

Ss (laughter)

## **P2's Class**

### Extract 1

- P     ye::s if we end up not having adequate water and most of the waters of the  
world are polluted already we will all turn into prunes (laughs)
- Ss    (laughter)

### Extract 2

- P     what's a steward
- S     steward?
- P     yes ask your gadget if you want if you don't know (laughs)
- Ss    (laughter)

### Extract 3

- P     what does what did God say to Adam and Eve ha?
- S     mumbling
- P     other than 'go forth and multiply' (laughs)
- Ss    (laughter)

**POWER AND POLITENESS: A STUDY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN  
PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS**

by  
**Mabel Paderez Victoria**  
**Y2943455**

**A dissertation submitted to  
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE STUDIES  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER IN RESEARCH (EDUCATION)**

**Supervisors:**  
Joan Swann  
Theresa Lillis

**The Open University**  
Milton Keynes  
December 2008

## **Power and Politeness: A Study of Social Interaction in Philippine Higher Education Classrooms**

### **Abstract**

Drawing upon naturalistic contextualized data, this study aims to expand current understanding of power and politeness in three higher education classrooms in the Philippines. It is particularly concerned to explore the usefulness of a politeness theory in describing the linguistic strategies that professors and students use when performing potentially face threatening acts. On the basis of data consisting of observation notes and audio recording, it is argued that (1) the difference in power between professors and students influences their choice of linguistic strategies. Professors used bald on-record language to ask lesson-related questions but oriented towards positive politeness rather than negative politeness when performing potentially face-threatening acts; students invoked negative politeness markers such as formal address forms, deference and hedging; (2) Pedagogical goals, lesson content, interactional context, and the presence and/or number of over hearers also exert pressure on the linguistic realisation of politeness. (3) The authoritative and discursive power of the professor over the students appears to be relatively fixed and unchallenged. But as the current investigation finds, there is another dimension to the professor-student relationship outside of the four walls of the classroom, where students, through one-to-one consultations, on-line discussions and journaling are afforded a less exposed, less face-threatening space.

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## CHAPTER 1      AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1      Introduction

It is believed that the quality of the relationship between teachers and students contributes to a comfortable classroom atmosphere, which is an important aspect of learning (Nguyen 2007). Therefore, professors<sup>1</sup> are expected to simultaneously work towards the pedagogical goals of the class and attend to relational goals as well. But as Nguyen argues (ibid, p.285), this creates a paradox: to achieve the instructional goals, the teacher is often required to perform face-threatening acts such as correcting students' mistakes or giving negative feedback; these acts, however, can result in loss of face and a negative classroom environment. In such an atmosphere, the professor might need to put the pedagogical task on hold in order to restore face and preserve harmony. As Kingwell (1993, p.401) asserts,

communication (...) is not simply phrasing interests and arguments or the maximally efficient transfer of information; it is also about not hurting other people's feelings, not having mine hurt, not saying all we could say, oiling the wheels of mundane social interaction, and strengthening the ties that bind us together.

An important component in the 'lubrication of social wheels' is politeness, which can be viewed as an individual's verbal or non-verbal way of showing concern for other people's feeling, being respectful and avoiding saying or doing anything that may be

---

<sup>1</sup> Academics who teach in tertiary level education

considered offensive by the other person one is talking to. It also refers to positive concern and non-imposing behaviour towards others (Holmes 1995, pp.4-5).

## **1.2 Linguistic Politeness and Power**

The school is a 'universe of language' (Bourdeau and Passeron 1994, p.19) and language is at the 'centre of what happens in the classroom.' (Manke 1997, xvi). In this study, language is being privileged as the focal point of investigation to gain understanding of how professors and students 'do' power and politeness in the classroom.

Intuitively, most people can infer the type of relationship the professor is invoking when she asks "do you understand" versus "is it understood." There is a huge difference between a swift, matter-of-fact delivery of "assignments must be handed in by Monday" versus a long winded "it's just one three-page ok, NOT a ten-page essay which I would like you to do over the weekend ok while I labour marking your test papers. I will let you off early, in fact, half an hour early to give you time to work on your writing so that there will be no excuse not to hand in your essay on Monday ok?"

In the current study, we will have a close look at data similar to the above to explore how three Filipino professors use linguistic politeness to accomplish the competing demands of transacting the business of teaching and attending to the relational needs of the students. An efficient and systematic transfer and acquisition of knowledge requires clear and unambiguous speech; yet, polite language tends to make



expressions vague and obscure especially when avoiding saying something that could bruise egos and hurt feelings.

### **1.3 Aims**

The aim of this study is to draw upon naturally occurring data from three higher education classrooms in the Philippines to expand current understanding on how the difference in power between professors and students influence their use of linguistic politeness. It seeks to explore other factors that affect their choice of politeness strategies. Using a context-sensitive approach, this research also hopes to describe how professors and students use language to construct social relations. Lastly, the very sociolinguistic theory used in the study data will be assessed in terms of its usefulness in explaining the intricacies of social interaction in the classroom.

#### ***1.3.1 Why power and politeness***

Politeness is central to effective human relations (Kallia 2004, p.145) as it ‘oils the works,’ ‘softens the blow,’ makes giving bad news more palatable, makes easier the asking of favours (Henry 1993, p.56), and serves as a ‘diplomatic protocol’ to neutralize aggression (Brown and Levinson 1987, p.1).

Power is an important dimension of politeness. In the classroom, the teacher is traditionally seen to hold the seat of power because of status, age, specialist knowledge and the ability to assign grades. As our data will illustrate, the power

differential between teachers and students, in addition to other factors, does exert pressure on language and the use of linguistic markers of politeness.

I would argue that the findings of this research can add to our understanding of how social relationships are established, maintained and shaped through talk. Given the importance that language plays in teaching and learning, significant insights can be gained from an awareness of how specific linguistic devices can be used strategically to create distance and closeness, formality and friendliness. Furthermore, a study of politeness can tell us more about “what contributes to the success or failure of our everyday interactions and what it is that strains and breaks or creates and improves social relationships” (Sifianou 1992, p.209).

### **1.3.2 *Why the Philippines***

In spite of a healthy research tradition on linguistic politeness in the last two decades, there does not seem to be any studies of similar nature using a Philippine context, particularly one that uses spoken classroom discourse as data. It is hoped that the results of this investigation will shed some light on how the politeness model used here, claimed to be universally valid, can account for social interaction in Philippine classrooms. Furthermore, the country holds personal interest to me because I was born and educated there. I do think that my sociocultural background and insider knowledge can add another dimension to the investigation.

## **1.4 Organisation of the Study**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In Chapter 1 above I presented the main aims of the study and rationale for them. Chapter 2 surveys relevant literature including theoretical background, definition of terms and related empirical studies. The research questions are outlined in this chapter. Chapter 3 clarifies important theoretical and methodological considerations and describes different methods of data collection. Rationale for choosing the particular method used is explained in this chapter, as well as concerns of ethical nature. Chapter 4 covers the data collection process including discussions on gaining entry, and a brief background about the Philippines. In the second half of this chapter, I explain what will be considered as ‘data’ and highlight the importance of context in analysis. After a description of the analytical framework, I give an overview of the three higher education classrooms observed, followed by a fine-grained analysis of selected examples. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings in light of the research questions, the theory used and related empirical studies. Lastly, I summarise the main findings in Chapter 6, address the limitations of the study and outline areas for further research.

## CHAPTER 2      LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness as an area of research has grown exponentially in the last three decades. It generated an explosion of scholarly activity following the publication of Brown and Levinson's politeness model in 1978, which was later re-published in 1987. There have been other well-known approaches to politeness (see Leech 1983, Lakoff 1973) but the Brown and Levinson model remains the most influential, the most comprehensive and considered the most operationalizable.

In this chapter, I discuss Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness and clarify related terminology that will be deployed throughout this paper. Then, I examine criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theory, describe the position I take in applying their model, and then outline relevant empirical research on power and politeness. The research questions are presented in the last section of this chapter.

### 2.1      Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is a universally occurring phenomenon used by all competent adult members in social interaction. It refers to redressive linguistic devices that speakers use to counter-balance potentially face threatening activities. It is argued that everybody has 'face,' a concept borrowed from Goffman (1967) which is similar to self esteem and is defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson p.61). Face can be positive or negative. A *positive face want* is a person's desire to be well thought of,

liked and admired by others, while a *negative face want* refers to a person's wish to act freely, unimpeded and not to be imposed upon by others. Face is always at risk of being lost or threatened so, it is considered in everyone's interest to maintain each other's face. This can be done by avoiding offensive or insulting acts that might be considered face threatening. Face threatening acts (FTA hereafter) are those acts that run contrary to the needs of the addressee to be liked (e.g. disapproval, disagreement and criticism) and to be unimpeded (e.g. commands, requests and suggestions).

### **2.1.1 Face Threatening Acts: Strategies for Speakers**

There are times when the need to perform an FTA outweighs the need to save face. Brown and Levinson (p.60) outline four superstrategies, ordered according to the seriousness of the FTA, that speakers can deploy when they have the occasion to perform an act contrary to the positive and negative face needs of the hearer.

- [1] **Do the FTA on-record, baldly without redress**, which means being direct and unambiguous such as professor saying to a student, "This kind of academic writing is not acceptable."
- [2] **Do the FTA with positive politeness (PP hereafter)** which can be achieved by saying something like "You have some really good points here but we should discuss how we can improve this essay."
- [3] **Do the FTA with negative politeness (NP hereafter)**, which is defined by a redressive action addressed to the hearer's negative face. A professor might

tell a student, “I know you’re really busy and have several articles to work on, but the office requires a re-submission by next Friday.”

- [4] **Do the FTA off-record** or indirectly criticising the student’s work without committing one’s self to the act of criticising. The professor might say “I imagine you’ve been really busy with your part-time job.”

It should be pointed out that there is a fifth strategy which is “Do not do the FTA.” However, because of the difficulty in knowing when speakers refrain from performing an FTA (without having to interview them) it will not be the concern of this study.

### ***2.1.2 Criticisms of Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory***

Brown and Levinson’s concept of politeness has been the subject of constant and close scrutiny (see Driscoll 2007, Lakoff and Ide 2005, Watts 2003, Spencer-Oatey 2000, Eelen 2001, Meier 1995). Critics question its ‘universal’ application and cross cultural applicability as well as its notion of face and face threatening acts (see Felix-Brasdefer 2006, Nwoye 1992, Gu 1990, Matsumoto 1988). The approach has also been accused of being overly ‘paranoid’ (Kasper 1990, p.197) due to its emphasis on conflict avoidance as the main motivation for polite behaviour. Fukushima (2004, p.368) argues that Brown and Levinson rely too much on sentence-level politeness; however, this claim is only partially correct. On close inspection, Brown and Levinson (p. 232) do recognise that FTAs can be contained in a series of utterances and exchanges.

Criticisms of the theory point out that its face-saving view of politeness is severely limiting and fails to account for the intricacies of social interaction. For one, politeness can do the opposite of face protection; it can be ill-intentioned (see Ermida 2006) and be used manipulatively to make an individual's exercise of power more acceptable (Bradac & Ng, 1993). Secondly, as the data in Chapter 4 suggest, politeness strategies are deployed not just to prevent hurt feelings and avoid conflict but also to create a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning.

The usefulness of Brown and Levinson's approach in conducting empirical studies has often been questioned (see Meier, 1995). I would argue, however, that Brown and Levinson's model can be valuable for two reasons: firstly, its core concepts are considered operationally valid (Ermida 2006, p.814) providing a framework for describing different aspects of social interaction; secondly, it provides an extensive list of linguistic output strategies for empirical research. It is the only one to date that provides enough details for micro-analysis and at the same time accounts for local discourse context (Stubbe et al. 2003, p.364).

The approach taken in this investigation is to use Brown and Levinson's model as a preliminary descriptive framework within which or in contrast to which, Philippine higher education discourse can be understood. It is being employed as a tool to sharpen the focus of the analytic eye and does not preclude other paradigms that can better explain the phenomena under study. This paper takes the position that there is not one single theory that can satisfactorily account for the minute details of social

interaction. Given the space and time limitation of this research, the application of one model is defensible.

### ***2.1.3 Cross Cultural Applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory***

Although each culture<sup>2</sup> will inevitably differ in what it considers as FTAs and how they are redressed, it is important not to exaggerate differences. As Sifianou (1992, p.43) rightly points out, universal principles of communication must exist; otherwise it would be impossible to have meaningful contact between people from different ethno-cultural back grounds. Ji (2000, p.1061) adds that although Brown and Levinson's concept of positive and negative face "may play an unbalanced role in a particular culture, there has been no evidence that they cannot be identified in that culture."

### ***2.1.4 Power in Brown and Levinson's Model***

In Brown and Levinson's (p.77) conception, power is defined as "the degree to which individuals can impose their plans and self-evaluation at the expense of other people's plans and self-evaluation." It is suggested that the difference in power between speaker and hearer will influence their discursive practices. For example, those in relatively more powerful positions may have less need for softening their language when talking to someone with less power. And since NP is deemed more

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<sup>2</sup> I follow Spencer-Oatey's (2008,p.4) definition of culture as a "fuzzy set of beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and each other's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour."



polite than PP, less powerful speakers will orient themselves to NP or off-record strategy.

Power is a highly contested area. Current literature associates the term with dominance, authority, status, distance, control and rank. In this study, I am looking at power on two levels. The first level is the 'given' which refers to the asymmetry resulting from the institutional nature of the professor-student relationship where professor determines the topics for discussion, distributes speaking rights, and regulates the amount of speaking time (Swann 2000, p.205). The second level pertains to the discursively 'constructed' and 'negotiable' nature of power. It can be argued that while professors appear to have more power than their students by virtue of their status, age, skill and authority to assign grades (Rees-Miller 1999, p.1095), students also have the power to negotiate classroom interaction (see Manke 1997) even when institutional rank makes this negotiation unequal (Johnstone 2002, p.113).

## **2.2 Empirical Research on Power and Politeness**

The relationship between power and politeness has only fairly recently been studied (Harris 2003, p.48). Research from workplace settings suggests that the two variables are inextricably linked. Takano (2004), from her study of nine employment settings in Japan, reported that Japanese women in positions of power deploy a mixture of powerful and less powerful speech when interacting with subordinates. Taking a speech act approach with a focus on directives, requests and advice, Vine (2004) investigated how female managers and employees from different organisational levels in a New Zealand workplace emphasise or minimise power differences. Her

findings indicate that social distance and power are not static entities but are constantly negotiated. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Holmes, Stubbe and Vine (1999) drew from a corpus of varied workplace encounters to describe how polite language is used to mitigate power in the workplace. In Switzerland, Diamond (1996) collected data from a psychotherapy training organisation consisting principally of American and Swiss-German speakers. Her research highlights the consensual nature of power as manifested in discourse strategies.

Locating her study in British courtrooms and police stations, Harris (2003) claims that contrary to Brown and Levinson's model, people with relatively powerful positions use heavily mitigated language when addressing less powerful hearers. Using a literary piece for her analysis, Ermida (2006, p.856) reports similar findings. As she puts it, "the linguistic behaviour of O'Brien-the-ally is rather laden with politeness tactics, even though he is by far the most powerful member of the discursive exchanges." This is a departure from Morand's (1996, 2000) results suggesting the opposite. In a laboratory based research, Morand found that those in higher positions used less linguistic politeness than those in lower positions. His data were collected from 84 American university students who engaged in four role plays and performed FTAs while interacting with a hypothetical other. In explaining his findings, Morand (1996, p.552) admits that "in real life, performing an FTA toward a potentially reactive face may cause speakers to express more politeness than they did toward the imagined face in the experiment."

Locher (2004) analysed the interplay between power and politeness in disagreements as played out in three different contexts: a family setting, a business meeting among

colleagues at a research facility, and public discourse excerpts from the 2000 US Election. She illustrates how politeness is deployed to mitigate conflict. She argues,

since the exercise of power can jeopardize the social equilibrium between interactants (in symmetrical as well as asymmetrical relationships), it is often softened by a display of consideration for the addressee ( *ibid*, p.4).

While there seems to be a wealth of power and politeness studies in the workplace and other professional institutions, there is a conspicuous lack of research activity focusing on higher education discourse. At the time of this writing, there is none involving Philippine contexts to my knowledge.

In Japan, Cook (2006) analysed audio- and video-recorded data from academic consultation sessions by three male professors and their undergraduate students in two Tokyo universities. She looked at the use of the Japanese honorific and non-honorific form and found that the use of the polite form is not pre-determined by institutional authority; but rather by the moment-by-moment interactional achievement by both parties. She claims that it cannot be assumed that, in all contexts, lower-status speakers will always show politeness to addressees of higher social status (*ibid*, p.286). Cook's study informs the current one in terms of the analytic process when scrutinizing power. While institutional authority is fixed, power as a discursive and interactional process is subject to negotiation.

Thonus (1999) examined 16 academic writing tutorials at Indiana University to determine factors that influence tutor dominance. Framing writing tutorials as

institutional discourse where the tutor is considered to have higher status than the tutee, she used suggestions (frequency and whether unmitigated or mitigated) as the unit of analysis. She posits that dominance is dictated by the institutional context and not by tutor attributes like language proficiency or gender.

Rees- Miller (1995) investigated linguistic markers that are used to soften and strengthen disagreements in an American university. She found that contrary to Brown and Levinson 's model, 'high power' professors used linguistic markers of politeness more frequently than 'low power' students. Students disagreed with less redress and professors disagreed with greater redress. Rees-Miller's study raises the issue of what can be considered face-threatening. While in some cultures, disagreement with the teacher can be highly face-threatening, she suggests that it can be face-enhancing for those who want to instil critical thinking amongst their students.

Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) examined linguistic devices that soften disagreements in asymmetric discourse when interlocutor corrects the mistake of an addressee of unequal status. Their study is different from Cook, Thonus and Rees-Miller in that they did not use naturally occurring data. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli gathered data from 80 native speakers of Turkish through questionnaires (more about this in the next chapter). The authors report that 'hypothetical' professors used direct language without feeling the need for redressive action but were equally concerned with building rapport and solidarity. Students softened corrections and disagreements with higher power addressees by using questions instead of statements. It is worth pointing out that in the workplace studies

mentioned above, the one study (Morand 1996) that seems to fully validate Brown and Levinson's prediction of the effect of power on discourse is the only one that did not use naturalistic data. It can be argued that the difference in findings can be attributed to what people think they should say versus what they actually say in contextualised, real-life situations. This does not necessarily imply that naturalistic discourse is superior to elicited data.

To sum up, the studies reviewed show that power and politeness are inevitably connected. While power seems to be institutionally pre-determined, it can be emphasised or downplayed depending on the goals of the interaction. The strategic use of linguistic markers of politeness gives power its fluid nature negotiating the pragmatic spaces between symmetry and asymmetry.

### **2.3 Politeness and the Filipino Culture**

It is generally accepted that the notion of politeness and polite behaviour vary across cultures. I would argue that there are also gaps in our knowledge of particular cultures. The Philippines is of particular interest as an under-studied research area where politeness patterns may differ from those in 'western' Anglophone context.

Filipinos have a saying: *Hindi baleng huwag mo akong mahalin, huwag mo lang akong hiyain*, which translates into 'It does not matter if you don't love me, just don't shame me.' (Yengoyan and Makil 2004). Filipinos are claimed to place a high value on the protection and preservation of the public face. Hence using a politeness

theory that has face-saving as its core seems to be the appropriate tool in the investigation of the country's cultural ethos.

It is of pragmatic interest to study language in a culture where indirect communication tends to be favoured. As Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000, p. 56) suggest, Filipinos tend to have an indirect style of communication which is often mistaken for dishonesty, social ingratiation and hypocrisy by people from other cultures. It can therefore be argued that in these days of globalization where communication across cultures could easily lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, there is value in shedding some light on how the principles of social interaction in this particular culture are embodied in language.

## **2.4 Research Questions**

This paper hopes to expand current knowledge of intercultural communication and attempts to fill a neglected aspect of research in Philippine linguistics and pragmatics. In the absence of previous related studies in the country, I will adopt an exploratory approach. Imposing limitations at this stage (MRes/pilot) might unnecessarily inhibit data collection and analysis. The following research questions will be explored:

1. What type of linguistic politeness strategies do Filipino professors use with students when performing face threatening acts?
2. What type of linguistic politeness strategies do Filipino students use when performing face threatening acts with professors/ with other students?

3. How do Filipino professors and students use linguistic politeness to construct relations?
4. What other factors (such as pedagogical aims, interactional goals, situation-specific context and so on) influence the choice of politeness markers?

The general hypothesis being tested in this study is that the power differential (perhaps in addition to other factors) between professors and students will exert pressure on their use of linguistic politeness. Professors will have less need for mitigation while students will use more polite language.

## **CHAPTER 3            METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

It is argued that the reliability of any empirical research depends more on the method of data collection than on the methods of analysis used (Lin 2005, p.75). In this section, I tease out relevant theoretical and methodological issues and will proceed in this order: first, I briefly discuss the quantitative-qualitative paradigm and then outline some pertinent data collection methods. Then, I explore the role of the researcher and address issues of objectivity and validity. Lastly, since the research involves human participants, I address concerns of ethical nature.

### **3.1    The Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigm**

Qualitative research is often associated with description, meanings and understanding; the quantitative method, with statistics, number and measurements (Berg 2004). In sociolinguistics, qualitative approaches are concerned with the “close examination of specific instances of speaker’s language use” while quantitative research “tends to look for general patterns in the distribution of linguistic features across different groups of speakers or different contexts” (Swann *et al.* 2004, p.252). Although the two approaches have conventionally been seen as dichotomous, researchers can and have used them in combination. In analyzing specific occurrences of language use in a community, for example, a researcher may look to the general distribution of linguistic features in that community for explanation (ibid.).



Indeed, as Hammersley (1992, p.172) maintains, it is possible to adopt a particular position on one issue and take up another on others depending on the goals and circumstances of the study. For example, if greater precision is the prime consideration, then breadth of description might take second priority; and vice versa (ibid). Given the nature of my data and the motivation for this study which is an in depth account of Philippine classroom interaction, I have elected to use the qualitative paradigm. An informal quantification of linguistic strategies used by research participants was done in order to supplement the qualitative description.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

In the field of linguistic pragmatics and in politeness research in particular, data are collected mainly through observation and elicitation or a combination of both (Lin 2006). Observation methods typically entail field work, field notes, and audio/video-recording of the naturally occurring interaction. Elicitation techniques can include the use of questionnaires called Discourse Completion Task (DCT), open-ended role plays and elicited conversation (see Spencer-Oatey 2008, Lin 2006, Beebe and Cummings 1996).

A DCT usually contains a contextualised description of several hypothetical speech situations followed by an incomplete dialogue. Participants fill in missing parts of the dialogue. DCTs can be easily administered enabling the researcher to reach a large number of participants quickly. However, as Mills (2003, p.44) claims, “when answering questionnaires, informants tend to provide stereotypical beliefs and language rather than the language that they actually use.” More importantly, DCTs

cannot capture the psychosocial quality of face to face communication (Beebe and Cummings 1996, p.77). They do not bring out the emotional depth and the unfolding dynamics of negotiation and sequential moves or turns, which is the heart of real interaction (Lin 2006, p.78).

The elicited conversation and role play methods are both staged for the purpose of collecting data. In elicited conversations, participants assume assigned discourse roles and talk about a particular topic determined by the researcher. In the role play method, participants take on different social roles and simulate specific communicative encounters (Spencer Oatey 2008, Lin 2006). As with DCT, elicited conversations and role plays enable the researcher to control variables such as gender, ethnicity, education, and so on. These methods allow for hypothesis testing and the creation of situations that would optimally draw out the focal object of inquiry (Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu 2007). For example, if the focus of the study is on professor-student disagreements, this can easily be built into the design of the DCT, the elicited conversations and the role plays.

I do not see any objections to using any of the elicitation techniques above but I am more interested in naturally occurring data. Observing participants in their naturalistic setting with real-world context and going about their normal activity (activity which would have taken place without the presence of the researcher) holds more analytic fascination to me. It can also be argued that the act of being polite is a socially-motivated behaviour in the “dual sense of being socially constituted and of feeding back into the process of structuring social interaction” (Kallia 2004, p.145).

There are several inherent challenges in using observation as a data collection method. For one, there are no guarantees that the phenomenon under study will take place within the time frame of the data collection. For example, if I wanted to focus on apologising in classrooms, it might take extensive field visits before I am able to collect sufficient data. Other difficulties are to do with gaining access, building rapport with informants and participants, getting permission and consent, and dealing with issues of ethical nature. Additionally, the very presence of an observer may influence the behaviour of the observed, which brings ‘naturally occurring’ data into question.

### **3.3 The Role of the Researcher in Observation Method**

To collect my data, I used the non-participant observer method. I took field notes, made audio recording of the classes and had informal chats with teachers and some students. Since I was the ‘instrument’ through which data are collected (and later on analysed), reflexivity and biography are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed.

Prior to data collection in the Philippines, I was confident that having grown up and having experience of higher education there should enable me to easily collect and examine my data. Moreover, since I had left the country more than 20 years ago, I thought it would be easy to maintain analytic distance. However, it took a lot of conscious effort to separate my pre-conceived notions from what I was observing. On the other hand, I do believe that my insider status and my cultural membership allowed me to see things that might otherwise go unnoticed. Indeed, Emerson (1983,

p.184) states, fieldwork is a “deeply personal as well as a scientific project,” where the subjective and emotional experiences are bound up with the interpretative process.

### **3.4 Accounting for Objectivity and Validity**

It has been argued that researchers cannot help but bring their own biographies and subjectivities to their field of inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), thus making a value-free interpretation impossible (Eisner 1993). So, instead of denying that my subjectivity can contaminate the data, my approach is to lay it out in the open and make it part of the analytic process.

Katz (1983, p.145) claims that qualitative researchers can and do empower readers to become subsequent testers. For instance, readers, based on their past experience of being a student or a teacher, can form their opinions regarding the findings of this study. Furthermore, the audio-recording is a permanent record of what I had heard during the observation (and transcription) and may be available for public inspection.

### **3.5 Ethics**

Approval was gained from the ‘Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee’ (HPMEC) before data collection. I was required to submit three documents: a detailed application form, a copy of the research information sheet (Appendix 1); and a copy of the consent form (Appendix 2). Participants were assured of anonymity

and confidentiality. As a gesture of gratitude for taking part in the study, participants will be offered a workshop based on the data at a later date.

After field work, I consulted the OU Ethics Committee because I had some ethical concerns regarding 'written' consent. The participants from one of the three classes only gave me their verbal consent, without signing the consent form. The professor said that their (hers and the students') 'word' should be good enough and that it was culturally inappropriate to be too 'formal' when giving permission. I was advised by the OU Head of the Ethics Committee that it was acceptable to take individuals' consent in whatever form is culturally appropriate; however audio recording might be considered where written consent is not culturally appropriate.

In this chapter, I describe my data collection approach and procedures. I also provide information about the Philippines. Then I discuss the importance of context in analysis. I also provide a rationale for not using a discourse analytic approach which is commonly identified with ‘power.’ After explaining my analytical framework, I give an overview of the three classrooms observed. I analyse selected examples in this order: first I scrutinise the linguistic strategies that professors use to ‘do’ power and politeness; second, I analyse the linguistic devices deployed by students. A short summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

#### **4.1 Data Collection**

In collecting my data, I borrowed concepts closely associated with ethnography such as field work, observation, naturalistic data, reflexivity and reactivity. My interest in the interconnectedness of language and meaning in action, culture and context hints of interactional sociolinguistics. The analysis in the second half of this section is informed by pragmatics and discourse analysis. Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, the framework being used here, was drawn from research traditions in social anthropology, conversational discourse analysis, syntax and linguistic pragmatics (Gumperz in Brown and Levinson, foreword, p.xiii). I contend that there is merit in adopting an eclectic approach in order to closely examine the multi-faceted nature of power and politeness.

#### **4.1.1 *The Philippines and its culture***

It has been claimed that politeness is interrelated with language and social reality (Lin 2005); hence, basic cultural norms for polite behaviour should be taken into consideration in the analysis (Pan 2008). It seems then, not only appropriate but necessary to provide relevant socio-cultural background about the Philippines.

The Philippines is a multicultural and multilingual South East Asian archipelago with more than 100 distinct languages (Mcfarland, 2004). English and Pilipino (also known as Tagalog) are the two official languages. English is the principal language of school instruction and also performs the role of integrating ethno-linguistically diverse communities with each other and to the rest of the world (Bernardo, 2004). Indeed, I myself have to use English with other Filipinos whose linguistic background is not Tagalog, which is my mother tongue.

Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000, p.56) maintain that Filipinos have a deep regard for values such as respect for authority and concern for others. They are said to be group-oriented rather than individualistic, and consider harmony to be a greater value than truth (Mercado 1994, p.95). Classroom culture tends to be highly teacher-centred, authoritarian and where students depend on the teachers for answers (Licuanan 1994). This is echoed by Tiongson (1994, p.197) who states that teachers are considered the ‘supreme authority’ whose words are accepted by the students as the ‘gospel truth.’

I do recognise the problem with making generalised statements about a culture. However, I am simply trying to lay a contextual framework that might be of relevance in building an interpretative base. It seems important to me to be aware of the perspectives of cultural members (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, Mercado, Licuanan and Tiongson) of the data collection site.

#### **4.1.2 Gaining Access**

Gaining access to research sites in Manila was done mainly by email. Through the school's websites, I found the contact details of potential informants to whom I sent information about my research (Appendix 3). For schools outside the city, negotiating entry was done through an intermediary who personally negotiated with gatekeepers on my behalf. The difference in methods of getting research permission probably reflects the rural vs. urban cultural differences. Access was negotiated with four schools (two universities and two colleges) although the current study will focus on only two.

#### **4.1.3 Procedure**

##### **4.1.3.1 Piloting the Recording Devices**

Prior to data collection, I did a trial of my recording devices which included two digital recorders (*Olympus* is the brand name), a lap top and audio player software (Express Scribe) onto which I had to upload the data. To conduct the pilot, I had to



simulate a classroom setting so I invited other postgraduate students to a work-in-progress seminar. I arranged the seating in the traditional classroom style where the teacher's desk is in front of the room and student chairs in rows. I put one digital recorder at the front of the room and one at the back. I listened to the recording immediately after the seminar and found the quality to be very good. I uploaded the data onto the audio player software, listened to the recording again and was satisfied with the results. I erased the data afterwards.

#### **4.1.3.2 Quantity of Data Collected**

The data being analysed in this study are part of a larger corpus involving 25 hours of classroom observation collected between May 4 and May 23, 2008 from four higher education institutions in the Philippines, three of which are located in Manila and one in a semi-rural setting. Although I realised from the outset that I might not be able to use all data within the MRes time frame, I wanted to collect enough data to gain as comprehensive a view of the classroom situation in the Philippines as reasonable. I also wanted to have a sizeable corpus which can be useful to refine research questions and determine boundaries for a three-year PhD programme. With hindsight, I now realize that collecting more data than I needed made it more difficult to select an appropriate sample of data for analysis. It took a lot of time to listen repeatedly to the recordings and to re-read my notes.

#### **4.1.3.3 Selection of Transcripts for Analysis**

Of the 25 hours corpus, 12 hours of recording were taken from graduate (MA level) classes involving three different teachers in the Education department. The MA classes were all done “presentation style” where groups of students gave a talk on an assigned topic while the lecturers performed regulative and facilitative functions. I decided not to include the data from the MA classes in this investigation for pragmatic reasons. Due to the presentation format of the classes, there were a lot of multi-party speech overlaps which made it very difficult to transcribe the recording. It took me nine hours to make a rough transcription of one hour of data. Furthermore, it would take an enormous amount of time and patience to transcribe about four hours of the MA data due to background noise. As it was summer time in the Philippines, the windows were open letting sounds from the outside contaminate the recording environment.

Of the 13 hours of undergraduate class observation, I managed to collect only seven hours of recorded data. The remaining six hours were field notes only because the teachers requested me not to make an audio recording for fear of making the students unnecessarily uncomfortable. I did not record ‘silence’ when students were doing a writing activity or solving mathematical equations. I did not include the Mathematics classes in the current study for analysis because I found that the data did not contain sufficient instances of the kind of interaction requiring the use of politeness markers. This is probably due to the nature of the subject matter where there is a specific right

and wrong answer. Furthermore, there was a lot of ‘silence’ in the Mathematics classes when students were solving their arithmetic problems.

In this paper, I focus on three classes: Literature, Academic Writing and Foundation of Nursing. I chose the Literature and Academic writing classes (from the same urban university) for two reasons: the audio recording from both classes was of relatively better quality compared to the rest of the data; they were similar in format (lecture/discussion) which produced more interaction between professors and students. I included the nursing class in the analysis because I was interested in exploring data from an institution located in a semi-rural setting. Since one of the research questions was to explore factors, in addition to power, that may affect the choice of linguistic politeness, I thought it would make for richer analysis to include a class from a potentially different regional culture. I realized after the analysis that the data base was too small to make claims regarding regional culture as a factor in the choice of linguistic devices. Although the data seem to suggest that students in the semi-rural school attend to a more ‘kinship-based’ type of politeness, further research is necessary to verify this observation.

#### **4.1.3.4 Observation Procedures in the Research Site**

On arrival at the schools, I was met by my informants who were either heads of the department or members of the school administration. Since they already knew about my research from previous communication, I simply used the opportunity to establish rapport with them. They then took me to the classrooms and introduced me to the professors. I left it up to the professors to decide where I should position

myself in the classroom, at what point the consent forms were to be given to students for signature and whether or not they would like me to personally tell the students about my research.

I adopted a fly-on-the wall, non-participant observer approach. For the Literature and Academic Writing classes, I used two *Olympus* voice digital recorders, which are no bigger than the average mobile phone and therefore quite inconspicuous. I placed one on top of the teacher's desk and I positioned the other one where I was seated. I had considered videotaping the proceedings but that would have been at the risk of being disruptive. The students seemed shy and conscious of my presence. I took detailed notes during the sessions and engaged in informal chats with the teachers and students outside the classroom. I did not make an audio recording of the informal interviews but made notes of the information after the interaction.

I listened to the data either immediately after the classes or at the end of the day. The voice recorder allowed me to store data on separate folders which helped me manage the data efficiently. I uploaded the data onto the audio software which was stored in a password protected laptop to ensure security.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

Brown and Levinson's lexico-grammatical model is used as the main framework for analysis, combined with a context-sensitive approach and supplemented by a pragmatically-informed discourse analysis. Before I proceed, I examine the role that *context* plays in the analysis.

#### **4.2.1 What is Data: The Role of Context**

Context, in the field of sociolinguistics, is conventionally seen as linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena that surround a particular linguistic feature or utterance; aspects of it tend to be prioritised depending on the type of study (Swann *et al.* 2004, p.50). One view comes from a Conversation Analysis (CA) perspective which focuses on the micro-structural aspects of talk based on the dynamics of turn-taking (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974, Eggins and Slade 1997, Hutchby and Wooffit 2001). In CA, context is talk-intrinsic where talk is seen as creating its own context so that each utterance serves as the context for the next and so on. External factors such as cultural context are considered unimportant unless the participants invoke them during the conversation (Roberts *et.al.* 1992).

In stark contrast is a view of context from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which tends to prioritise external elements that CA considers unimportant (unless speakers make them relevant). CDA posits that the micro-interactions of everyday life are inextricable from the larger, macro structures of the society in general.

Blommaert (2001, p.1) states that CA and CDA treatments of context are both flawed: whereas in CDA, contextual information that should be scrutinised is often accepted as 'mere facts'; in CA, context is reduced to observable and demonstrably consequential features of talk. It has been argued that CA's talk-intrinsic notion of context needs to be combined with CDA's approach of acknowledging socio-cultural

and situational factors (see Thornborrow 2002, Davis 1988). As Davis (1988, p.59) notes:

Descriptions of conversational openings or variations in the way turns are taken, interruptions made, utterances repaired and the like are incomplete unless they are considered in the light of who is allowed to do what and who is, in fact, doing it.

A similar position is taken up by Duranti and Goodwin (1992, p.3) who argue that context is a 'juxtaposition' of the focal event and the field of action where the particular event is embedded. They emphasise the mutually reflexive relationship between context and talk in the sense that "talk shapes context and context shapes talk." Thus, the notion of context adopted in the current study is that it includes relevant external factors and the talk-intrinsic aspects of the interaction. Data will include field notes and audio recording juxtaposed with the participants' social and hierarchical roles, and institutional and national culture that might be of relevance to the interpretation.

#### ***4.2.2 Power and Critical Discourse Analysis***

This study is about power and politeness in the classroom, and CDA is often associated with the study of power in discourse. With its socio-political stance and a commitment to interventionism, CDA aims to uncover "social power abuse, dominance and inequality" (Van Dijk 2001, p.352). Its critics point out, however,

that when power is used as the main category for interpretation, the immediate context and other potentially relevant aspects might be overlooked (Vine 2004).

CDA as a total approach is not being used in this study because I do not want to start from *a priori* assumptions about power relations. Furthermore, it would seem inappropriate if I took a critical stance against my informants (both in higher management positions). This does not mean that data analysis and interpretation are compromised. What it means is that I see my role as a researcher, not as social critic or political commentator with commitments to interventionism.

#### **4.2.3 Data Management and Coding: Categories of Analysis**

The Brown and Levinson categories of analysis consists of fifteen PP strategies, ten NP strategies and fifteen off-record strategies as shown below:

Negative Politeness	Positive Politeness	Off –record
<p><b>Be direct</b></p> <p>1: Be conventionally indirect</p> <p><b>Don't presume/assume</b></p> <p>2: Question, hedge</p> <p><b>Don't coerce H</b></p> <p>3: Be pessimistic</p> <p>4: Minimize the imposition</p> <p>5: Give deference</p> <p><b>Communicate S's want not to impinge on H</b></p> <p>6: Apologize</p> <p>7: Impersonalize S and H</p> <p>8: State the FTA as a general rule</p> <p>9: Nominalize</p> <p><b>Redress other wants of H's</b></p> <p>10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding H</p>	<p><b>Claim Common Ground</b></p> <p>1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)</p> <p>2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)</p> <p>3: Intensify interest to H</p> <p>4: Use in-group identity markers</p> <p>5: Seek agreement</p> <p>6: Avoid disagreement</p> <p>7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground</p> <p>8: Joke</p> <p><b>Convey that S and H are co-operators</b></p> <p>9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants</p> <p>10: Offer, promise</p> <p>11: Be optimistic</p> <p>12: Include both S and H in the activity</p> <p>13: Give (or ask for) reasons</p> <p>14: Assume or assert reciprocity</p> <p><b>Fulfil H's wants</b></p> <p>15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)</p>	<p><b>Invite conversational implicatures</b></p> <p>1: Give hints</p> <p>2: Give association clues</p> <p>3: Presuppose</p> <p>4: Understate</p> <p>5: Overstate</p> <p>6: Use tautologies</p> <p>7: Use contradictions</p> <p>8: Be ironic</p> <p>9: Use metaphors</p> <p>10: Use rhetorical questions</p> <p><b>Be vague or ambiguous: violate the manner maxim</b></p> <p>11: Be ambiguous</p> <p>12: Be vague</p> <p>13: Over-generalize</p> <p>14: Displace H</p> <p>15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis</p>

**Figure 1: Brown and Levinson's strategies for redressing FTAs. 'S' refers to Speaker and 'H' to Hearer.**



I had initially planned to code the data in three stages: first by counting the number of turns made by professors to students, students to professors and then students to other students; the second stage was to identify the speech acts encoded in the turns that are considered face-threatening; and the third stage would have been to code the strategy used according to NP, PP and off-record. However, even in the initial stages of coding, it became apparent that the exchanges were very teacher-centred - with professors asking the questions and students providing answers. It did not seem a worthwhile exercise to simply count the number of turns. I then tried coding according to moves based on the three-part Sinclair-Coulthard model (1975) but cutting up the discourse according to a neat Initiation-Response-Follow up proved to be very problematic. Some of the stretches of discourse did not lend themselves to an orderly I-R-F tripartite. I therefore carried out a manual coding based on Brown and Levinson's classification of bald-on record, on-record with PP, on-record with NP and off record strategy present in the whole corpus.

I based my unit of analysis on the concept of 'elicitation sequence' which in the current study is a completed interaction sequence between professors and students consisting of a directive in the form of a question and the accompanying response. Due to the institutional nature of the discourse, it can be argued that a question is a type of directive demanding an action in the form of a response (Dalton-Puffer and Nikula 2006, p.243)

An example of a two-part 'elicitation sequence' is shown on the extract below. It consists of a directive question and a reply.

Figure 2 Example of a Two-Part Elicitation: Q (Question) and R (Reply)

Bald	Pos.	Neg.	Off- rec	
X				Q P2: What is the main reason why we end up polluting the water?
				S1: (raises hand)
				P2: Yes, M_____ (motions for student to give answer)
X				R S1: (replies) Ignorance.
X				Q P2: What else?
X				R S2: Neglect
X				R S3: Greed!
X				Q P2: And then too many demands on the - the limited resource is water certainly we cannot drink the water in the ocean, why?
X				R S2 Salt!

In the corpus, other elicitation sequences consisted of three parts: a *question (Q)*, *reply(R)* and an *evaluative comment(E)* from the teacher.

Figure 3 Example of a Three-part Sequence (Question, Reply, and Evaluation)

Bald	Pos.	Neg.	Off-rec	
X				Q P3 kita nyo na error ninyo? ((Do you realise your error?))
X				R S puro error nga ((Lots of errors, in fact))
	X Strategy 15			E P3 <u>it's ok beginner kayo</u> ((It's ok, you're beginners))
X				Q P3 <i>Eton a</i> – is coughing related to smoking? ((here it comes))
				R Ss (SILENCE)
X				Q P3 are you able to identify your errors?
X				R Ss Yesss (Chorus)
	X Strategy 2			E P3 so it's good that we accept our errors.

### 4.3 Overview of Politeness Strategies in the Three Classrooms

Figure 4 shows an overview of the three classes observed. It should be noted that P1 and P2 teach in UPA<sup>3</sup>, a private university located in urban metro Manila. P3 teaches for CPN, a private college outside of the capital. English is the official medium of

<sup>3</sup> Names of schools are pseudonyms

instruction although some code-switching (into Tagalog, the common linguistic background) is not an uncommon practice.

	Subject	Student Profile
<b>P1</b> (Professor 1) Male	Literature	14 Students: 7 Males, 7 Females Age: 16-20
<b>P2</b> (Professor 2) Female	Academic Writing	13 Students: 13 Males, 1 Female Age: 16-20
<b>P3</b> (Professor 3) Female	Foundation of Nursing	41 Students: 6 Males, 35 Females Age: 16-20

**Figure 4: Overview of the three classes observed**

All classes observed were teacher-centered. P1 and P2 used a discussion type discovery approach where they asked all the questions and the students gave prompt replies. During both visits, P1’s class was discussing a classic novel and a selection of English poems. P2 was using an article on water conservation to unpack the components of an argumentative essay as well as to teach students how to write one. During the first observation, P3 was giving a lecture using overhead transparencies (OHT) as teaching aid. She would read off the OHT, summarize relevant points and encourage students to ask questions. On the second visit, P3 had the students prepare meals in the school kitchen for hypothetical patients with special needs.

In all the classes observed, bald on-record elicitation sequences were used most frequently. This can be expected from the institutional context of the discourse. As Dalton-Puffer & Nikula (2006, p.244) claim,

transmission and/or co-construction of knowledge is so central to the teacher’s job description that there are two acts of interpersonal communication which are completely sanctioned by the purpose of the institution: giving information and demanding information about the student’s state of mind or state of knowledge.

It can be inferred from the bald-on record usage that curricular content questions carry little face threat. When mitigating face threats, PP, more than NP, was used more frequently by all three professors. Students oriented towards NP through the use of address forms like *ma’m*, *miss* or *sir* and hedges (e.g. *I guess*, *I think*, *perhaps*, *maybe*, *in my view only*) especially when expressing their opinions.

As shown below, the three professors used more bald-on record followed by PP and then NP. It should be pointed out that P3 has the least number of elicitation sequences because, as mentioned above, she lectured using an overhead transparency for uninterrupted periods of time lasting for about 20 minutes. She then opened the floor for questions and elaborations. There were several “silent” episodes of 15 to 20 minutes long when students were copying notes off the OHT.

**Table 1:      Professor 1, UPA**

Bald on Record	139	71%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	48	24%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	10	5%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>197</b>	100%

**Table 2:      Professor 2, UPA**

Bald on Record	71	42%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	63	37%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	35	21%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>169</b>	100%

**Table 3:      Professor 3, CPN**

Bald on Record	24	42%
Mitigated with Positive Politeness	12	37%
Mitigated with Negative Politeness	2	21%
<i>Total Number of Elicitation Sequences</i>	<b>38</b>	100%

Figure 3 below gives a breakdown of the specific PP and NP strategies used by all three professors:

	P1	P2	P3
PP	Humour*, intensify interest to H, use of in-group identity markers	Humour*, avoid disagreement, notice/attend to H	Give gift (sympathy) to H, avoid disagreement
NP	Hedge, be conventionally indirect	Hedge, be conventionally indirect, minimize imposition	Hedge
Off – record	(no occurrence of this strategy found)	Give association clues	Be ironic

**Figure 5: Frequent Strategies used by P1, P2 and P3. The more general term ‘humour’ is being used instead of Brown and Levinson’s ‘joke.’**

*Humour* was extensively used in P1’s class, with *intensifying interest* and *using in-group identity markers* as the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> preferred strategy (see Appendix 5 for

samples of humorous extracts). All 15 of Brown and Levinson's PP strategies were present in P2's class with *humour*, *avoiding disagreement* and *noticing/attending to H* as the three most frequently used. P3's most frequent strategies were *giving the gift of sympathy* and *avoiding disagreement*.

Brown and Levinson identified 10 NP strategies as shown in Figure 1, however, only three types were found in the data – be conventionally indirect, question/hedge and minimize the imposition. This probably reflects the relative informality of the classes (further evidenced by the use of humour as a PP strategy). As Holmes (1995, p.20) claims, negative politeness strategies are used more often in formal situations whereas positive politeness devices tend to occur in intimate and more informal situations.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, positive face want refers to the need to belong, whereas negative face want refers to the need to be left alone. In broad terms, Brown and Levinson consider PP as 'polite friendly' and NP as 'polite formal.' Figure 3 then indicates that the professors invoke friendliness and closeness, more than they do formality and distance.

#### **4.4 Professors, Power and their Use of Politeness Strategies**

A fine-grained analysis is necessary to unpack how power negotiates symmetry and asymmetry through the use of linguistic politeness. As Locher (2004, p.2) notes:

(...) power (...) reflects the degree of solidarity between interactants. One may, for example, exercise power merely to prove that one is in a more powerful position, thus emphasising difference. Or one may show restraint in the way power is exercised, taking the addressee's face needs into consideration and thus indicating some degree of solidarity as well.

In the classroom, teachers can seldom avoid performing functions that may be face threatening to their students; a few of which are error correction, giving feedback or evaluation, handling/expressing disagreement, demanding display of knowledge and giving homework. Below, I discuss some specific instances of FTAs related to these typical teaching tasks and how they are redressed.

#### **4.4.1. Example 1:      Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback**

The example below illustrates how P1, a male professor, typically corrects a 'mistake' in his class. P1 was asking a student (S), a male, about his interpretation of a poem.

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | S1 | erm, I think it's the sunset <sup>4</sup>  |
| 2 | P1 | sunset?  |
| 3 | S  | because erm the stars that shine on Milky Way it symbolises the<br>sun rise or sun = |
| 4 | P  | =sun?  |
| 5 | S  | it says "along the margin of a bay so it's setting =                                 |
| 6 | P  | =what's setting  |

---

<sup>4</sup> Transcription conventions are in Appendix 4



- 7 S =the sun
- 8 P the sun is setting,
- 9 S1 'they stretched in never-ending line' means the rays of the sun?
- 10 P wait, so would you say they stretched, the sun's rays? What is 'they?'
- 11 S2 flowers?
- 12 P huh?
- 13 S2 flowers?
- 14 P the FLOWERS! 'they' is the flowers right? 'stretched in never-
- 15 ending line' what what is 'continuous as the stars' literally what?
- 16 S2 the daffodils
- 17 P the flowers again! Ok?

P1's utterance in line 2 '*sunset*' is an implied challenge to S1's interpretation using 'lexical repetition' which according to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.112) can be used to stress interest and to show that one has heard correctly (strategy 1 'notice/attend to H'). It can also be P1's way of giving S1 a chance to re-think his answer. It can be inferred from S1's, justification in line 3 that he took P1's repetition as a challenge. In lines 4, 6 and 9 P1, continues without giving the correct answer. In lines 11 and 16, S2 gives out the correct interpretation and P1 confirms that indeed, the correct answer is '*flowers*.' P1's tag questions '*right*' in line 14 and '*ok?*' in line 17 can be interpreted as PP devices, that of seeking agreement. While on the topic of the same poem, P1 asks the students to interpret the figurative use of '*wealth*' in the poem, but as can be seen below; he did not offer a correction but instead revoiced S3's answer in 2. He added the question word '*why*' to scaffold the

student to the more correct answer, but was just met with silence in line 3. Perhaps to save S3's face, P1 in line 5 acknowledges and partially agrees with S3's reply with a hedged '*but it's more than just that.*'

- 1      S3      pleasure?  
2      P1      pleasure? why?  
3      S3      (silence) (.3)  
4      P1      ok when you see something nice, sure, pleasure  
5           but it's more than just that,

Immediately after having committed FTAs when correcting the two students above, P1 closed the interaction by a PP oriented redress. He said that the poem was really about invoking happy memories when one is feeling sad.

- 1      P1      what do you call that a memory candy or something your happy candy  
2           your thought candy or something, it's something he can pull out of his  
3           memory bank when he's getting low or feeling bored, think back, do  
4           you guys do that?

Above, P1 used several markers of PP: 'strategy 4, in-group language or slang (*memory/happy candy* is a term commonly used by young Filipinos) thereby claiming common ground; use of '*you guys*' which presupposes familiarity softening an FTA, use of vague language (*something*) which relies on the 'inevitable association with shared knowledge' (p.111) and bald on-record '*think back*' which carries an intimate, familiar tone. Bringing up the topic of '*memory candy*' is another

PP strategy – ‘to seek agreement by raising safe topics’ (p. 112). As Brown and Levinson claim, ‘the more the speaker knows about the hearer, the more close to home will be the safe topics he can pursue with the hearer’ (ibid). Evidence that the above PP strategies were meant to be restorative was when P1 nominated the two students whose interpretations he corrected to talk about their ‘*happy candy*.’

#### 4.4.2 Example 2: Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback

Below, P2 was asking a display question where she already knows the answer.

- |   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | P  | where does that water come from?  |
| 2 | S  | the ocean   |
| 3 | P  | the ocean?  |
| 4 | S  | [the river]   |
| 5 | S  | [rivers]  |
| 6 | P  | = but, you’re <u>TAKING up Biology right?</u> you talk about water cycle, |
| 7 |    | where does the water come from?   |
| 8 | Ss | the rains!  |
| 9 | P  | the RAINS! <u>CORRECT!</u>  |

P2 first uses lexical repetition in line 3 to indirectly suggest that the answer was incorrect. In line 6, after two consecutive wrong answers, she switched to an off-record strategy 2 ‘give association clues.’ ‘*You’re taking up Biology*’ implies that students should know the correct answer. This can also be interpreted as mild disapproval or ‘off-record sarcasm’ (p.220). P2’s strategy worked as students, in

unison, gave the correct answer. In line 6, P2 restores the possible FTA in line 6 by resorting to PP 'strategy 2' of 'exaggerating approval' (p.104) by way of a very animated intonation in line 9. She used a similar strategy later on in the same lesson:

P2     AYAN! I was waiting for that answer,

Ayan is a Tagalog word which roughly translates into 'that's it right there' which is an exaggerated approval, PP strategy 2, made more emphatic by the use of the vernacular.

#### 4.4.3 Example 3: Correcting a Mistake/Giving Feedback

In this Nursing class at CPN, the P3, a female professor was giving a lecture using an overhead projector. The extracts below were from my notes. I was asked not to make an audio recording because it made the students uncomfortable.

- 1     P3     are you able to differentiate the error as well as correct?
- 2     Ss     (silence)
- 3     P3     Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ if you are involved how would you react?
- 4     S1     (silence)
- 5     P3     THIS, is how you will react! (while pointing to the answer on the
- 6            board). Mahirap talaga.((It's really difficult)) Anxiety is normal.
- 7            Your anxiety fires you up to study di b a?((don't you think?))

P3 wanted to make sure that the students understood the content. Her question in line 1 is met by silence so she nominates a male student who remained silent. P3 gives the correct answer written on the overhead transparency. It can be inferred that line 5 is face-threatening because of the PP redress in lines 6 and 7. By saying '*This is how you will react!*' P3 was giving the whole class a severely face-threatening reproach. The implication is that the students should know the answer because it had just been explained (the overhead transparency was still displayed on the whiteboard). To heal the damaged faces, P3 suddenly code-switches to the vernacular '*mahirap talaga*' which is PP strategy 5 'give gift (sympathy) to H' (p.102) and strategy 4 'use in-group dialect' Using '*di ba*' is PP strategy 6 'avoid disagreement.'

It is noteworthy that P3 performed the severe FTA in English which might have a distancing effect and the redress in Tagalog which invokes solidarity and familiarity. The switching from English to Tagalog allowed her to navigate between being 'in' and 'out' of the group.

#### **4.4.4 Giving orders/request/advice**

In classrooms, directives such as 'turn to page 130' or 'listen' are commonly used without any need for mitigation. It would be unusual if a professor tells her students, 'could you perhaps possibly turn to page 130, please?' In the corpus, all three professors used unmediated directives like 'copy this,' 'think back,' and 'remember.'

Towards the end of the class, P1 tells his class to write their reflections on their journals:

- 1      P1      Let's get your notebooks and give us your reflections for the day
- 2              about our theme and erm tomorrow I want you to have read the next
- 3              two chapters in (??).

P1 uses '*let's*', '*us*' and '*our*' to mitigate the directive and to indicate that teacher and students are co-operators (strategy 12 'include both S and H in the activity'). He gives the homework hedged (NP strategy 2) by the use of "I want" instead of a direct 'read the next two chapters.'

At the time of my observation, there was no mention of homework in P3's class. Below is from P2 who took a several-step process in giving homework.

*Extract 4.4.4.1: Paving the ground for an FTA*

- 1      P2      so, question, 'am I going to write a *ten-page* essay for my
- 2              argumentative essay to persuade?' the answer is no, ok?
- 3      S      ok twenty? (in a light-hearted tone)
- 4      Ss      (laughter)
- 5      P2      (laughs) NOT twenty, twenty is already a research paper
- 6      Ss      (laughter)

Line 1 above illustrates P2's use of linguistic resources to attend to the negative and positive face wants of her students. By using active voicing 'am I going to write...' she is presupposing to know what her students' concerns are (PP strategy 9). Her choice of the word 'ten' (ten-page essay) is NP strategy 4 'minimise the size of the

imposition (which will become clearer in the next example). In effect, she has already redressed the face threatening act even before verbalising it. P2 proceeds to deliver her face threatening directive:

*Extract 4.4.4.2: Delivering Redressed FTAs*

7      P2      I want you to write MAY:BE between a three to five page essay,  
8              depends on how heavy your topic was. some people have very  
9              difficult topics, some people have easier ones ok? erm so we will start  
10             doing the writing next week so I want you to start getting getting the  
11             books so that Monday I want you to have the books with you. the only  
12             way to write at all is for you to have the books first ok? so tomorrow  
13             read pages 158 to 160 that's what we will discuss. I hope  
14             we'll end a little bit earlier cuz it's any way a Friday erm ok?

In line 7, P2 says that it is not a *ten* but actually a *three to five page* essay that she wanted students to write – so the ‘hypothetically’ huge imposition in line 1 has been minimised. It is hedged with *maybe* and *I want* which she also used for lines 10 and 11. In line 13, she gave a bald on-record order (*read page 158 to 160*). It can be inferred that she considers the reading assignment not face threatening at all. However in lines 13 and 14 (*I hope we'll end...Friday*) she uses PP strategy 10 ‘give an offer or promise.’ According to Brown and Levinson (p.125), speakers may stress their cooperation with the hearers by claiming that whatever it is the hearers want, they want for them too and will help to obtain it. So, P2 is presupposing that Ss would like to go home earlier on a Friday and she can help make this possible. PP ‘strategy 14, assume or assert reciprocity’ is also contained in lines 13 and 14 by

‘fulfilling H’s want for some X’ (p. 129). So P2 is satisfying her students positive face want by giving them gifts of sympathy, understanding and cooperation.

After line 14 there was a question from the students clarifying when the assignment was due (I did not include this extract). P2 then continues:

*Extract 4.4.4.3: The Penultimate Blow: Negotiating Symmetry*

- 21     P2     I’m just talking about what we will do tomorrow. It’s just one short  
22                essay, three page which I assume we will finish MUCH faster than  
23                the ten-page we did today right? ok ? and I want you to start getting  
24                your sources so that on Monday we have time to take notes in class ok  
25                YOU CAN actually start taking notes erm at home on Saturday and  
26                Sunday while I labour checking your test papers ok coz I still have not  
27                finished the (coughs)  
28                the short seat work I gave so maybe two or three more and then your  
29                actual essays. I normally spend my weekends checking ok (laughs)

Lines 21 to 29 is a mixture of NP and PP to cushion a fairly emphatic directive (using the pronoun *you*), which according to Brown and Levinson is one of the most intrinsically face threatening acts of commanding. Interspersing the utterances with an inclusive *we* attends to solidarity needs of the students. As Brown and Levinson (p.127) state, using an inclusive ‘we’ form when ‘you’ or ‘me’ is meant, ‘call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs.’



Lines 26 and 29 in the example above, can be interpreted as PP strategy 9 ‘assume and assert reciprocity’ (p.129) implying that ‘I’ll do X for you, so do Y for me.’

*Extract 4.4.4.4: Upgraded Face-saving and Face-threat*

The extracts above were from P2’s class on a Thursday. The extracts below were taken the day after, a Friday. P2 refers back to the essay mentioned the day before.

- 1           that, I would like you to do on Monday.
- 2           I’m LETTING you off early, in fact
- 3           half an hour early ok (.3) so that there will be no excuse not to have
- 4           any materials for- on Monday okay you have you have plenty of time
- 5           so get your notes first so by next week you already have an outline.
- 6           We’ll revise your thesis here so that you don’t have to worry about it
- 7           at home. Write your essay Friday Saturday Sunday at home ok,
- 8           So okay that’s our game plan for next week. Ok thank you.

The lines above clearly illustrate how P2’s institutional power as teacher interfaces with politeness. Line 3 embodies P2’s authority with ‘*so that there will be no excuse.*’ Notice that this voice of authority, while carrying force, is still mitigated by the use of a general and agent-less construction. Instead of saying ‘*you won’t have any excuses,*’ P2 uses ‘*there will be no excuse.*’

Line 7 carries the clearest and most face-threatening utterance, bald on-record ‘*write your essay Friday Saturday Sunday at home.*’ This directive is an impingement on

the students' negative face want or the need to be freed from imposition. She ended the session with

P2     So okay that's our game plan for next week.

In the above, 'so' is used to mark 'pseudo-agreement' when in fact there was none (p.115) and 'our' implies co-operative effort when the plan seems to be just P2's. It can be argued that the whole utterance '*that's our game plan*' is P2's way of emphasising power; quite similar to the use of tactical summaries in negotiations where one of the parties presents a summing up move that's favourable to their cause and unfavourable to the interlocutor (Charles and Charles 1999,p.74). The use of "game plan" can be interpreted as P2's use of metaphor to call upon solidarity that they are on the same team. It might also have been intended to connote fun (instead of burden) which is what 'game' brings up.

#### **4.4.5    Checking for understanding**

Teachers often check to make sure that students understand the lesson content. Professor 1 used the word "no" a few times which is a Tagalog particle that functions as a tag question. For example:

1       P1     Hard to say, *no*? ((isn't it))

P2, on the other hand, frequently used ‘ok’ with a rising intonation. P3, as the examples will show below, had to perform FTAs to ensure that the students understood the lecture.

- 1      P3      I just hope you know ‘TENACIOUS.’ *Baka( (maybe))* you write it
- 2                    there without knowing it. *Naintindihan nyo?* ((Do you understand?))
- 3                    *Kasi po mahirap talaga. ((Because po it is really difficult)).* You need
- 4                    to know this by heart.

P3 has just finished reading a section from the OHT containing the word ‘tenacious’ She was making sure that the students knew what it meant. Her tone sounded to me sarcastic and disapproving. This is lexically signalled by the use of the Pilipino respect particle ‘po’ in line 3. ‘Po’ is used to show deference for people who are older or with higher social status/authority. P3 is older and with higher social status and authority so by using ‘po’ she is conveying an off-record sarcasm (Brown and Levinson p.220), which P3 confirmed in an informal chat after class. In line 2, P3’s question ‘*Naiintinindihan ninyo ito*’ which means “Do you understand” is quite direct because of the pronoun ‘you.’ In the extract below, P3 uses ‘*Naiintinindihan ninyo ito*’ three times. She used ‘why’ six times with an irritated and frustrated tone.

- 1      P3      WHY, WHY do you need to know these things?
- 2      Ss      (silence)
- 3      P3      why, WHY nursing diagnosis facilitates quality care?
- 4      Ss      (silence)
- 5      P3      WHY WHY do you think? what’s nursing diagnosis?

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| 6  |    | <i>NAAINTINDIHAN NINYO BA? Why, NAAINTINDIHAN NINYO BA?</i>           |
|    |    | ((do you understand?)) ((do you understand?))                         |
| 7  | Ss | (silence)   |
| 8  | P3 | (looking, with raised eyebrows, specifically at one student)          |
| 9  | S1 | (stands up) Assessment is importante <i>po. Para</i> makapag-plan.    |
|    |    | ((In order to make a plan))   |
| 10 | P3 | OK exactly! diagnosis will lead to a plan. <i>Naiintindihan ninyo</i> |
|    |    | ((do you understand?))  |
| 11 | Ss | <i>Opo</i> Yes (mixed)  |

P3's repetition of 'why' and tone of voice can be inferred as a demand for an answer which threatens the student's positive and negative face. She downgraded the FTA from line 1 which is a very general question (*Why do you need to know these things*) to being more specific in line 3 (*why, WHY nursing diagnosis facilitates quality care?*) to line 5 hedged by "think" (*WHY WHY do you think?*) She eventually reduced the difficulty of the question to a 'what' (what's nursing diagnosis?) which could be interpreted as pedagogical or as a face-saving move. The lack of response from the students can be face-threatening to P3 and P3's outburst is face-threatening to the students. According to Brown and Levinson (p.66), expression of out-of-control emotions is an FTA to the addressee indicating that 'the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings wants, etc.'

The group's silence can be interpreted as the consolidated power of the class to withhold that ratification. According to Diamond (1996), silence can be used to withhold ratification of the speech act. It can be argued that:

power is shared by all participants in action. Because an actor needs his or her self-image to be ratified, those in the position to ratify it hold power in that they may withhold their ratification and acknowledgement, thus denying someone the successful attainment of leadership or power. (ibid, p.14)

Silence in classrooms is notoriously difficult to analyse. It can be used as a face-saving strategy to avoid criticism or disagreement or an off-record strategy to convey that one does not know the answer (Nakane 2006). It seems to me that the students used silence to protect their own self-esteem. It was big class of 41 students which makes the threat greater. When I asked S1, about the above extract, she said that she needed to participate in class because she was applying for a scholarship and that a certain percentage of the grade is based on class participation.

#### 4.4.6 Handling Disagreement/Challenges from Students

In the next extract, one of P2's students was questioning the idea of using water as fuel in place of gasoline.

- 1        S        but if we're trying to save one resource we end up using another=
- 2        P2        = not really because we're not God we can't create we can
- 3                only convert so if we use one as long as long as we use it
- 4                correctly, I guess which is the whole point of the essay really I don't
- 5                think the essay is saying don't progress (.)I think it's just saying be
- 6                responsible for your actions so you'll have enough to use in the future

- 7                I think the use of water to run cars for instance will end up producing  
8                water vapours which will go back to the water cycle which is not the  
9                same as fossil fuel which is an even more scarce resource.  
10              Did you hear that in the news today it can go up to \$200 a barrel?

S sets up a contradictory view by starting line 1 with '*but*.' P2 offers a reply hedged by '*really*.' S and P2 use the inclusive '*we*' in lines 1 and 2. The reference to God in line 2, works as PP strategy because it appeals to common ground. P2 mitigates her opinion by using I '*(don't) think*' and '*I guess*' as NP strategy 2 'hedge' to signal that she is not imposing her views on the students. P2's use of NP is perhaps a preventative move to avoid disagreement. Her use of the second pronoun in line 6 can be inferred as PP device by emphasising the direct beneficiary of the action, invoking PP strategy 3 'intensify interest.' In line 10, P2 changes the subject to the price of gas to avoid disagreement and move on to a '*safe topic*,' PP 'strategy 5. Talking about the exorbitant gas prices in the Philippines is one topic that most Filipinos agree about. P2's move to change the topic is an instantiation of power. The data suggest that it is the prerogative of the more powerful interlocutors to decide how long to keep a particular topic on the floor and when a new topic gets taken up.

#### **4.5 Students and Their Use of Politeness Strategies**

Most spoken data from students were in response to teacher questions, which were mostly bald on-record. When expressing opinions or hesitation though, students use negatively polite language perhaps to signal their lack of confidence or uncertainty

about their answers, thus protecting their self esteem. It can also be seen as respect for the negative face of other students by not imposing their opinion on them.

#### 4.5.1 Deference and Hedging

Two of the most common strategies used are deference by way of address forms ‘ma’m, miss or sir,’ (NP strategy 5) and the use of the Tagalog respect particle “*po*” (observed only at CPN). The Tagalog hedge word ‘*parang*’ (roughly equivalent to the verb ‘seem’ or ‘seems as if’) was observed being used six times as a code-switch (3x in P2’s class and 6x in P1’s class). It is used as a hedging device, thus NP strategy 2. It is noteworthy that all instances of ‘*parang*’ co-occurred with ‘sir’ in P1’s class as below:

sir erm Svidrigailov (...) and *parang* trying to prevent her marriage

sir, he’s *parang* he’s not cuz (...)

sir, *parang* giving the reason to drink more

The co-occurrence of ‘sir’ with “*parang*” is complex to interpret. Using my native speaker intuition, it signals not only hedging but also a “humbling” of the speaker’s opinion. Adding ‘*sir*’ to the whole utterance invokes deference as well as affection.

#### 4.5.2 Symmetric Interaction: Students to Students

There was little verbal exchange observed between students. This is perhaps due to the teacher-centred structure where professors control and distribute speaking rights. I had one opportunity to observe nursing students in a cooking class at CPN. They used Tagalog to address each other. Below is an exchange between two female students.

S1     Ate, paano ba mag-gisa?  
      ((Big sister, how do I sauté?))

S2     O, eto, ganito ang gawin mo?  
      ((Look here, do it this way))

Although the two are not related, S1 addresses S2 (who appeared older than S1) as *ate* or big sister. The word *ate* simultaneously signals respect and solidarity while invoking responsibility. As *ate* or big sister, the person being addressed is expected to care for the younger one, and the younger one in turn is to show deference to the older addressee. S2's response is an unmitigated directive which indicates familiar, intimate relationship with the addressee.

#### 4.6 Summing up Data Collection and Analysis

In this chapter, I explained how I used non-participant observation method to collect data through audio recording and field notes. A context-sensitive data analysis show



that the three professors used PP more than NP when redressing face threatening acts such as correcting a mistake or giving homework. Students on the other hand used NP in the form of hedging when dealing with professors. In the one class observed where students had the opportunity to interact with each other, students used the vernacular creatively to invoke deference and solidarity at the same time.

## **CHAPTER 5            INTERPRETING THE DATA**

In the previous chapter, the general hypothesis being tested was that professors, who have more relative power defined as “the degree to which individuals can impose their plans and evaluation at the expense of other people’s plans and evaluation” (Brown and Levinson, p.77), will have less need to for mitigation when performing an FTA; students with less power will use more polite language. This chapter answers the research questions posed in Chapter 2 and discusses the main findings in light of the theory and relevant literature.

### **5.1    Linguistic markers of politeness: How professors use them to construct relations.**

The data show that PP is the overwhelming strategy preferred by all three professors. This is closely tied with power because it is usually the privilege of the more powerful interlocutor to ‘come closer’ to the less powerful; not the other way around. In Rees-Miller (2000), the professors tended to use PP strategies like humour and positive comments when disagreeing with students. This is attributed to the professors’ desire to enhance the face of the students and to encourage them to participate in class. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) report similar findings – that high status professors seemed to be as concerned with solidarity as much as avoiding impositions. Morand (1996, p.551) claims that power works as some sort of ‘license’ for using PP. This type of politeness observed in Philippine classrooms is also consistent with what Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.56) refer to as ‘hierarchical

politeness system' where "the person in the superordinate upper position uses involvement strategies in speaking *down*" (PP in Brown and Levinson terms) and "the person in the subordinate or lower position uses independence strategies (NP in Brown and Levinson terms) in speaking *up*"

Based on Brown and Levinson's politeness model, those in positions of more power will have less need for mitigation. This seems partially borne out as the three professors relied on PP which is considered less polite than NP. It still warrants scrutiny why professors who are institutionally sanctioned to issue directives need to use linguistic politeness. Based on Brown and Levinson's theory, the main motivation would be to satisfy the addressees' need to belong (positive face) and the need to be left alone (negative face). But this is where the theory seems inadequate; it constrains the analysis and fails to exhaust other plausible interpretations. Polite language can be deployed for other reasons. For one, as Bradac and Ng (1993, p.7) claim, it makes ordering someone to do something more 'palatable.' Indeed, Holmes *et.al.* (1999, p.355) argue that manipulative transactional intent can be sugar-coated with politeness. Humour, for example, which was frequently used by P1 and P2, can be a way of doing power less explicitly making it "more acceptable in context where informality is valued and status differences are played down" (Holmes 2000, p.176).

Holmes and Stubbe (2003, p.40) state that those with institutional power and authority try to achieve a balance between getting people to do a good job and showing consideration for their feelings. This seems consistent with Koester (2006, p.115) who claims that "getting someone to perform an action –creates a discursive

imbalance which the discursively dominant speaker often seems to try to offset by using relational strategies (...).”

On the basis of the data collected, I would argue that professors use linguistic politeness to ‘elasticise’ the fixedness or given-ness of their institutional power. Linguistic devices give them a communicative resource to slide up and down the power scale. Takano (2005, p.656) claims that Japanese women in powerful executive positions deploy a similar strategy:

Using downward shifts (...) allows the speaker to deny her formal figure as a superior and descend to the level of the subordinates, by which her illocutionary intention is likely to obtain willing support and empathy from her peers. In using upward shifts (...) on the other hand, the speaker deliberately detaches herself from in group solidarity (...) and brings her institutional role and identity back to the surface to obtain formal power.

In other words, professors may use PP to be seen as one with the students, thus enhancing cooperation; at other times they may highlight institutional power, thus emphasizing distance and ensuring that students fulfill school requirements. Linguistic politeness allows them to go ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the group, enabling them to shift identities - professor to friend to professor again and so on depending upon the goals of the interaction.

## **5.2 Linguistic markers of politeness: How students use them with professor/other students to construct relations**

Brown and Levinson consider NP to be more polite than PP, and usually characterises the speech of lower ranking actors when addressing someone of higher status. The data show very few student-initiated questions and there was no overt disagreement with a professor or with another student. The mere absence of disagreement is in itself a reason for closer analysis. Is it a sign of respect for the professor, or possibly an indication of high value placed on group harmony? Or do Filipino students take the professor's word as 'gospel truth'? This does not seem to be the case. It turns out that there are other avenues for students to communicate with their professors apart from the classroom hour. For example, immediately after P2's class, one student approached her expressing dissatisfaction with the reading material used that day. This suggests that Brown and Levinson's "Don't do the FTA" strategy needs to be qualified into "Don't do the FTA in the presence of witnesses and overhearers." Giving negative feedback is arguably more face-threatening to both student and teacher in the presence of observers.

P1's students use a journal to record their thoughts and reflections. This is one way they communicate with the professor without having to worry about being the centre of attention in class. They also have access to an on-line discussion group set up by P1. Through this discussion group, students have the chance to express their views without the potential threat associated with face to face interaction.

Culture might also be an explanatory variable. The Filipinos' deeply held values of respect for authority (Pe-Pua and Protacio Marcelino 2000), harmony (Mercado 1994) and the teacher's 'supremacy' in the classroom (Licuanan 1994) are perhaps reflected in the way higher education discourse is played out.

Another possible explanation for the absence of overt disagreement can be attributed to the presence of the researcher. Students might have been more self-conscious than usual knowing that the proceedings were being audio recorded. Since I was only on-site for two visits, they did not get the opportunity to get used to my presence.

### **5.3 Factors that influence the choice of politeness markers**

The data suggest that there are other factors, namely; pedagogical goal, curriculum content and interactional context that exert an impact on linguistic politeness.

P1, apart from humour, used *intensifying interest* and *in-group identity markers* as main devices. It seems appropriate considering that he was trying to get the students interested in reading modern literature and poetry. His use of in-group markers (Tagalog particles used as tag, informal and familiar language) serves to encourage his young students to express their interpretations without fear of embarrassment. P1 needs to nurture critical thinking in his students and build their confidence in interpreting literary pieces; therefore, blatant correction would have been counterproductive. The nature of the subject taught makes the rightness or wrongness of an elucidation subject to negotiation. This is consistent with Rees-Miller (2000) whose findings indicate that pedagogical context, besides face maintenance concerns

tied to power differential influence the linguistic realisation of the speech act of disagreement.

P2 used humorous jokes and anecdotes that are jointly collaborated with her students. Her extensive use of mixed PP strategies can be partially explained by her pedagogical goal. Unlike P1, she was not merely asking the student to display their knowledge; she was 'ordering' them to write an essay. Request for action carries more imposition and thus more face-threatening than request for information; therefore more redress is required. Furthermore, what made the imposition weightier is the fact that it needed to be done outside of classroom hours over a summer weekend.

P3 used *giving gift of sympathy* and *avoiding disagreement* as preferred PP strategy. Although she used more directives compared to P1 and P2, she also used sympathy-giving more frequently. P3 is a practicing nurse which enables her to relate to her students easily. Her strategy use of *avoiding disagreement* was signalled through the use of tag questions and *raising of safe topics*.

Interactional or situational context has been shown to influence the choice of linguistic devices. Bald on-record which is the least polite in Brown and Levinson's model can be the most polite thing in some contexts, for example in P3's class of nursing students. As Brown and Levinson claim, one of the payoffs for going on record is avoiding being misunderstood. In the previous chapter, we have seen how P3 threatened the positive face of her students by using off-record sarcasm and disapproval. To add a bit of contextualisation, it needs pointing out that P3 was very

disappointed with her students' poor performance in the exam given a few days before data collection. The implications of the exam results are serious – for one, the students might not qualify for professional certification; more importantly, patients' lives can be endangered if students make mistakes. P3 had discussed the disappointing test results with the students and had emphasised to them the necessity of asking questions in class to make sure things are clear. This explains the face threatening, emotionally loaded stance of '*naiintindihan nyo?*' ((do you understand?))

On the basis of P3's class in particular, I would argue that linguistic (im)politeness cannot be adequately assessed by using Brown and Levinson's variables of power, distance and imposition. Situation-specific interpretation is necessary in order to analyse the data accurately. Evidently, (in comparison with P1 and P2) there is a world of difference between teaching students how to interpret poems or write essays and showing them how to perform life-saving procedures.



## CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS

### 6.1 Summary of Findings

The main findings in this study can be summarised as follows:

1. The professors in the study used bald on-record language to ask lesson-related questions. This indicates that such type of request for information is not considered face-threatening. However, they used a mix of face-saving strategies, although more PP than NP, when performing potentially face-threatening acts of correcting a mistake, giving feedback, handling disagreement, checking for understanding and giving homework.
2. Students generally used bald-on record and NP when answering lesson-related questions. NP was realised through the use of formal address forms, respect particle and hedging.
3. Findings suggest that institutional power influence the choice of linguistic markers. The high power professors used PP when performing potential FTAs towards the lower power students. As stated in Chapter 2, PP is usually a prerogative of the more powerful interlocutors. They have the option to initiate solidarity and invite informality but usually not the lower power speakers. The students oriented towards NP, which is more polite than PP.

4. Other factors that seem to influence linguistic politeness are pedagogical goals, lesson content, and interactional or situational context. From the students' perspective, the presence and/or number of overhearers also seem to be a factor. There are other aspects that might affect linguistic politeness such as gender, personality, ethno-cultural background, education, social class, regional/national and school culture and even mood; however it is not within the scope of this study to analyse the data against those variables.

5. Teacher-student role in the classroom appear to be relatively fixed; teacher asks questions and students respond; teachers control turn-taking and allocate communicative resources. The institutional asymmetry seem unchallenged by students although as stated in the previous chapter, they have other avenues that allow them to communicate with their professors in a less face-threatening way such as through one-to-one consultations, on-line discussion groups and journaling.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There are several theoretical and methodological concerns that need to be raised.

Firstly, Brown and Levinson's model was a useful, albeit inadequate, tool of analysis. It sharpened the focus on the micro-interactional functions of classroom talk. However, it had to be extended to handle discourse level (instead of speech-act/sentence level) analysis. More importantly, even Brown and Levinson's extensive list of strategies cannot account for everything that was going on. To interpret the multi-faceted social relations between professors and students, it was necessary to

include context-specific elements gathered from observation and informal chats with participants. I find the theory's over-reliance on face-saving and conflict-avoidance limiting because other factors for committing or redressing an FTA are underplayed. Despite its shortcomings, I believe that Brown and Levinson's model is flexible enough so that it can serve as a basic descriptive format useful for cross-cultural comparisons. But then as May (1997, p. 40) posits, "social life itself is diverse and complicated and perhaps, therefore, not amenable to understanding through the use of a single theoretical paradigm."

Secondly, the observed data does not include non-verbal clues such as gesture, facial expressions and gaze. Since I had to sit either at the front or at the very back of the classrooms, my view was severely limited. Video recording might have been helpful but it would have been at the risk of being disruptive.

Thirdly, despite having used two digital recorders (one near where the teacher was sitting and another at the back of the room), they could not capture the nuanced aspects of the discourse. Part of the reason is background noise (from air-conditioners and/or ceiling fans, other students in the hallway, etc.). This has seriously limited the interpretative base because para-linguistic signals like initial "erm" or "but" in the "yeah, but..." may have been missed. Subtle hesitation markers can serve as important clues and spell the difference between a mitigated or unmitigated FTA.

Another limitation is the unequal distribution and quantity of teacher versus student talk. This has resulted in more focus on teacher utterances. Students only spoke when

nominated and even when answering questions, their replies were limited and non-elaborative.

Lastly, the issue of reactivity needs to be addressed. How much of an effect did my presence have on the data? When I asked one of the professors if what I had observed was typical, he said “more or less.” He had told the students to speak in English only (instead of mixing it with Tagalog) during the observation. This might have changed the data because code-switching is one of the communicative strategies under scrutiny. Another possible ‘contaminant’ to naturalistic data is my entry point. I gained access through high level management which may have made the teachers self-conscious, if not suspicious. Due to time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to build rapport with the teachers before observation. To decrease the effects of reactivity, it would be ideal to observe the classes over a longer period of time so teachers and students will get used to my presence.

### **6.3 Future Research**

Analysis was based on speaker output. Whether the hearers, perceive the utterance as polite is another story. As Eelen (2001, p.96) indeed, points out “the production of behaviour by a speaker and evaluation of that behaviour by a hearer” are both essential elements of the communicative encounter. Therefore, more valuable insights can be gained from including both speaker and hearer in future research.

Spoken language has been privileged in the current research as a key to understanding social interaction. However, as Atkinson (2005, p.7) claims, “there is

a clear danger of treating language analysis as being self-contained and self-justifying activity.” Having carried out this investigation has for me underscored the importance of taking a multi-disciplinary and context-sensitive approach which can account for the shifting dynamics of social interaction. For future research, I would adopt a theoretical and methodological stance that would combine interactional sociolinguistics with ethnography so that a more robust view of context, including the social, cultural, historical and political, can be taken into account.

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## APPENDIX 1      INFORMATION SHEET



The Open University

A Study of Communication in University Classrooms  
In the Philippines  
The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

As someone educated in the Philippines, I am interested in carrying out research in order to explore the type of language used by professors and students in higher education classrooms.

If you take part in this study it will help to gain more knowledge and understanding which will benefit educators and students in creating a more effective and dynamic teaching and learning environment. All research participants will receive a brief report on this research, and I will also offer a workshop for any participants who are interested based on my analysis of the data.

I will collect the information by tape-recording classroom interactions (lectures, talks, tutorials) and analyzing them afterwards. The audio recorded data will be treated as confidential and the data will be anonymised in transcription and quotation. If you have some questions about the research, please contact me, Mabelle Victoria at [M.Victoria@open.ac.uk](mailto:M.Victoria@open.ac.uk). If you would like to talk to someone else, please contact either or both of my supervisors whose contact details are outlined below.

If you want to withdraw from the study at any time you are free to do so. At your request, data collected from you will not be transcribed, analyzed or be treated as part of the research data.

Supervisors: Joan Swann ([J.Swann@open.ac.uk](mailto:J.Swann@open.ac.uk)) and Theresa Lillis  
([T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk](mailto:T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk)).

## APPENDIX 2

## CONSENT FORM



The Open University

A Study of Communication in University Classrooms  
In the Philippines

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

### CONSENT FORM

I consent to taking part in Mabel Victoria's study. I understand that the recordings will be treated as confidential and the data will be anonymised in transcription and quotation. I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email or Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3

## REQUEST TO DO RESEARCH



The Open University

### **A Study of Communication in University Classrooms In the Philippines**

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology  
Applied Language and Literacies Research Unit (ALLRU)  
The OPEN UNIVERSITY UK  
<http://creet.open.ac.uk/index.cfm>

### **Introduction**

There is a great deal of evidence on the significant role language plays in teaching and learning, in higher education as in other sectors. While studies have been carried out in several countries, there does not seem to be a lot of research on the role of language in higher education in the Philippines. As someone educated in the country, I am interested in carrying out research in this area. My main aim is to understand how language is used in Philippine university classrooms to create effective learning environments. I am doing this research as a full-time PhD student in the Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET) at the Open University, UK (see contact details below).

### **What is involved?**

As a pilot study I am seeking, with permission, to record classroom lessons, talks or seminars involving undergraduate and/or graduate students. I would also like to carry out follow-up interviews with you and perhaps some of your students.

## **Timescale**

The pilot study will take place within a three-week block during the summer term in May 2008.

All research participants will receive a brief report on this research, and I will also offer a workshop for teaching staff and/or students based on my analysis of classroom data. The interaction will be audio recorded and then analyzed using a specific framework of linguistic categories.

## **Further information**

For further information on the research, please contact me by e-mail at the address below:

Contact details: Mabelle Victoria. E-mail: [M.Victoria@open.ac.uk](mailto:M.Victoria@open.ac.uk).

Supervisors: Joan Swann ([J.Swann@open.ac.uk](mailto:J.Swann@open.ac.uk)) and Theresa Lillis ([T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk](mailto:T.M.Lillis@open.ac.uk))

## APPENDIX 4

## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(???)	unintelligible text
(word?)	guess at unclear text: e.g. I (apologize?) for the delay in shipment
(.2)	length of pause in seconds
::	noticeable lengthening of a vowel
.	falling intonation at end of tone unit
?	high rising intonation at end of tone unit
,	slightly rising intonation at end of tone unit
!	animated intonation
-	unfinished utterance, e.g., false start
WORD	Words written in capitals to indicate emphatic stress: e.g. VERY
[words]	
[words]	simultaneous speech indicated in brackets: e.g.  A:     mm// Did you [read the report]  B:                     [didn't have] the time
=	latching, no perceptible pause after a turn
(laughs)	single brackets describe current action, transcriber's comments
(( ))	double brackets contain English translation of Pilipino words: e.g.  A: <i>Isulat mo ito.</i>  ((Write this down.))



## APPENDIX 5      EXAMPLES OF HUMOUR

## P1's Class

### Extract 1

P how many think that she she would actually send her man to death than be  
happy with somebody else, but not herself how many would how many  
would actually think of doing that

Ss (a few raised their hands)

P     so if you can't have her no one can?

Ss (laughter)

P Svidrigailovs everywhere! (laughs)

### Extract 2

P What is the price of you reputation 10 M pesos? *Pwede na* ((That's possible))(laughs)

Ss (laughter)

### Extract 3

P     you *guys*, what can you do when you're out of here, finish your studies then  
work then what (.) [that's it?]

S [sir]

P      and then you die! (laughs)

Ss (laughter)

## **P2's Class**

### Extract 1

P     ye::s if we end up not having adequate water and most of the waters of the  
world are polluted already we will all turn into prunes (laughs)

Ss    (laughter)

### Extract 2

P     what's a steward

S     steward?

P     yes ask your gadget if you want if you don't know (laughs)

Ss    (laughter)

### Extract 3

P     what does what did God say to Adam and Eve ha?

S     mumbling

P     other than 'go forth and multiply' (laughs)

Ss    (laughter)